

THE BOOK OF POETRY

BRITISH POETS

PAGES 819-1166



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THE BOOK OF POETRY

Collected from the Whole Field
of British and American Poetry.
Also Translations of Important
Poems from Foreign Languages.

Selected and Annotated
with an Introduction by
EDWIN MARKHAM

*Poetry fettered,
fetters the human race.*

—William Blake.

VOLUME IV

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THE BOOK OF POETRY

Collected from the *Woods* Field
of British and American Poetry
and the *Woods* of the *Woods*
Poems from the *Woods* of the *Woods*

Edited by *Woods*
and *Woods*
of the *Woods* of the *Woods*

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BRITISH POETS
FROM THE 8TH CENTURY
To 1630

VOICES OUT OF THE EARLY MIST

THE earliest recorded literature of our English race is Anglo-Saxon, and the earliest of this literature is poetry.

When the troops of imperial Rome were summoned home from the British Isles early in the fifth century to defend the empire against the inroads of Teutonic invaders, strife sprang up among the Celtic tribes left in possession. The southern Celts, less hardy because they had been under the Roman heel, were swooped upon by their kinsmen from the north and west, who bade fair to overwhelm them. The losing southerners cried for help to the Teutonic tribes who lived on and near the easterly shore of the North Sea—Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The summoned allies did not cease, however, with beating off the opponents of the southern Celts: they went on to overrun the country for themselves, driving the remnants of the Britons into Scotland, Wales and Cornwall.

For six hundred years the language of these Teutonic conquerors formed the speech of England. It is called Anglo-Saxon; and although it is the fountain-head of current speech in England and America today, it is a language wholly unintelligible to us without study.

The poetic literature of the Anglo-Saxons expresses, within a remarkably small compass, the life and thought of a people. "If there is anything truly national in the world, it is the old heroic songs of our English folk."

The style is elliptical, abrupt, exclamatory, glowing. Swift impassioned images leap out like flashes of fire from cloud.

VOICES OUT OF THE EARLY MIST

Our Anglo-Saxon ancestors were a brood of lusty livers, with something inalienably heroic in the mould of them. They loved fighting and eating and drinking and vaunting. In their poetry is reflected the pride and melancholy of the race, its trust in sinew and its flair for adventure. There is a harsh and masculine joy in hardship:

"Then we together on the sea going,
Fared five nights forth; by floods hurled apart;
Weltering the waves; weather the coldest,
With darkest night, and northern wind,
Battle-grim billows, rough-crashing breakers—
The mood of the sea-beasts turned into rage."

There is a zest in the clash of battle:

"In perils of battle
On places of slaughter—
The struggle of standards,
The rush of the javelins,
The crash of the charges,
The wielding of weapons—
The play that they played with
The children of Edward."

* * * * *

"Five young kings put asleep by the sword-stroke,
Seven strong Earls of the army of Anlaf
Fell on the war-field, numberless numbers,
Shipmen and Scotsmen."

* * * * *

VOICES OUT OF THE EARLY MIST

The philosophy of Anglo-Saxon poetry, even of that written after Christianity had come, is temperamentally fatalistic.

“Radiant the mead-halls in that city bright,
Yea, many were its baths. High rose its wealth
Of hornèd pinnacles, while loud within
Was heard the joyous revelry of men—
Till mighty Fate came with her sudden change!”

“Wyrd” it is that governs the world, the Word decreed by Fate. But these people by no means permitted themselves to be cowed by “Wyrd”; rather they pressed the harder because the edge was sharp. They faced the world with its loneliness and with its evil as only brave men could. In the lament of the minstrel Deor, he remembers in old times the woes of others who suffered more, and still strove on and overcame, and so will he!

In form this old poetry is directly opposed to the principles of modern verse. It lacks rhyme and a measured line.

It is speech straight from the shoulder, thought straight from the heart. The crowding passion of meaning precludes conscious simile, although the very language is compound of imagery. It was natural for the author of *Beowulf* to speak of a ship as a “floater foamy-necked”, of night as “the shadow-covering of creatures”, and of cliffs as “the windy land walls”. With these living phrases, which nevertheless the Saxon poets must have considered the plain way of speech, the song was made, “without connectives, without order, with no ornament but three words beginning alike, an exclamation, a cry, a glowing image. Joy and fury neglect art. When passion bellows, ideas are crowded and clashed.”

VOICES OUT OF THE EARLY MIST

Thus in the battle-song of *The Fight at Finsburgh*:

"The army goes forth:
The birds sing,
The cricket chirps,
The war-weapons sound,
The lance clangs against the shield.
Now shineth the moon, wandering under the sky.
Now arise deeds of woe,
Which the enmity of this people prepares to do.
Then in the court came the tumult of war-carnage.
The raven whirled about,
Dark and sombre like a willow leaf.
There was a sparkling of blades,
As if all Finsburgh were on fire."

Every people has its Hercules or its Samson, its ideal of brute energy—some one who strangles dragons, cracks the jaws of lions, or sends fear and death on hostile armies.

Sometimes this national ideal is of a higher order. Sometimes, to his physical prowess and iron will, he adds the large heart of the truly heroic. He is then heralded as the great captain who is just and noble, and who sallies forth to free his land of giant fiends or of invading dragons. Such a hero is the central figure in our earliest English epic, *Beowulf*, imported—anonymously—from its Continental homeland early in the eighth century, and revised by some unknown Christian bard.

We call him Christian because none other would have referred to Cain, would have called the people heathens, and would have written the couplet:

"When sorrow on him came and pain befel,
He left the joy of men and chose God's light."

VOICES OUT OF THE EARLY MIST

The heroic Beowulf is a mighty knight errant before the dawn of Chivalry, one whose sword is ever pulsing in his hand. Let me tell his story with the help of Alfred Welsh, and others. Beowulf has had terrific experiences. He rowed his boat amid storming winter seas, when the many-colored sea-monsters drew him to the ocean bottom, held him fast in their grip till he reached the wretches with the point of his broadsword.

Beowulf crosses the sea to succor Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, whose banquet halls were sorrowful because Grendel, an oger, "a mighty haunter of the marshes", had entered at night, seized thirty of the sleeping warriors and carried their carcasses to his dwelling in the deep fens. For twelve long winters the fiend had devoured men, till houses were standing empty.

The daring Beowulf offers to grapple with the monstrous oger. When the mists are spread out and all is still, Grendel enters and seizes a sleeping warrior, crushes his bone-casings, drinks his blood and swallows him with "continual tearings". But the hero seizes him in turn, and in the struggle the sinews of the monster spring asunder, the bone-casings burst; and leaving on the ground his hand and arm and shoulder, he flees to his somber fen sick unto death.

But a female monster remains, "the sea-wolf of the abyss, the mighty sea-woman", the mother of Grendel. She steals in at night, and, amidst drawn swords, tears and devours the king's chosen friend. Beowulf follows the ogress to her dread abode, where fearsome dragons and serpents swim. Fire flashes at night over the flood, while at intervals the horn sings a wild terrible dirge.

Beowulf plunges into this watery abyss, and the ogress, seizing the hero in her horrid clutches, carries

VOICES OUT OF THE EARLY MIST

him to her den, where a pale gleam shines and shows them face to face. She overthrows him: he starts up and espies and seizes "an old gigantic sword, doughty of edge, the work of giants". Fierce and savage, despairing of life, he strikes furiously, breaks her "bone-rings", passes through the doomed body, which sinks, and all is silent.

"The sword was bloody, the man rejoiced in his deed:
The beam shone, light stood within,
Even as from heaven mildly shines
The lamp of the firmament."

The Death-Going of Scyld

FROM "BEOWULF"

FORTH he fared at the fateful moment,
Scyld the Grim into God's protection.
Then they bore him over to ocean's billow. . . .
In the roadstead rocked the ring-prowed vessel
(The lovèd leader had long possessed it)
Ready and gleaming, a royal ship.
There laid they down their darling lord
In the boat's wide bosom, the breaker of rings,
By the mast the mighty one. Many a treasure
Fetched from far they flung beside him.
Never have I known a ship nobler decked
With weapons of war and weeds of battle,
With blades and breastplate. On his bosom lay
The heaped-up hoard that hence should go
Far over the flood with him floating away.
No less they gave him lordly gifts,
Ampler treasure than erst did they
Who in former time forth had sent him
Sole over the sea, a suckling child.
High over his head they hoist the standard,
A golden banner; let billows take him,
Gave him to ocean: grave was their spirit,
Mournful their mood. For men are powerless
To say in sooth, sons of the hall,
Heroes under heaven, who welcomed that freight! ¹

¹ Translated by Gummere.

The Haunt of Grendel

IT was a dismal land,
Wolf-haunted cliffs and windy headlands,
Fen-ways fearful, where flows the stream
From mountains gliding 'neath gloom of rocks,
Underground flood. Not far is it hence,
By measure of miles, that the mere expands;
And over it the frost-bound forest hanging,
Sturdily rooted, overshadows the wave.
In the dark of night is a dread to see:
Fire on the waters. No wight so brave
Of the sons of men who will search that flood!
Nay, though the heath-pacer, harried by dogs,
The hornèd stag, this holt should seek,
By hounds far-driven—his dear life here
On the brink he yields ere he braves the plunge
In those dismal waters! ¹

After becoming king and after reigning fifty years, Beowulf goes forth to fight a monster worm, or fire-drake, in a cavern near the sea. After carving the worm in twain, the hero is killed by the flame-breath of the dragon; and as he dies, he utters these noble words:

“There was not any king among my neighbors
Who dared to greet me with warriors,
To oppress me with terror.
I used no treacherous malice,
Nor swore unjustly many oaths.
Because of all this,
I—sick with mortal wounds—may have a joy.”

¹Translated by Gummere.

CAEDMON

ENGLAND, 7TH CENTURY

THE christianizing of the Anglo-Saxons early in their period of supremacy resulted not only in modifying their language by the addition of Latin words, but also in affecting the substance of their poetry. The first great name in English literature is Caedmon, who in the second half of the seventh century paraphrased various parts of Biblical history. Disraeli called this early poet, "the Milton of our forefathers"; and the resemblance between the two is veritably large. Both have a high and serious tone; and there are, moreover, striking resemblances between *The Paraphrase* and *Paradise Lost*. Besides likenesses of phrase, there will be found in both poems a sublime conception of Satan. In Caedmon, the Hebrew Tempter, transformed by the German sense of the might of individual manhood, becomes a republican, disdainful of vassalage to God.

The Beginning of Creation

FROM "THE PARAPHRASE"

THEN thought within his mind the Lord of hosts
How He again might fix within his rule
The great creation, thrones of heavenly light
High in the heavens for a better band,
Since the proud scathers had relinquished them.
The holy God, therefore, in his great might
Willed that there should be set beneath heaven's span
Earth, firmament, wide waves, created world,
Replacing foes cast headlong from their home.

CAEDMON

Here yet was naught save darkness of the cave,
The broad abyss, whereon the steadfast King
Looked with his eyes and saw that space of gloom,
Saw the dark cloud lower in lasting night,
Deep and dim, vain, useless, strange to God,
Black under heaven, wan, waste, till through his word
The King of glory had created life.

Here first the eternal Father, guard of all,
Of heaven and earth, raised up the firmament:
The almighty Lord set firm by his strong power
This roomy land; grass greened not on the plain,
Ocean far spread hid the wan ways in gloom.
Then was the Spirit gloriously bright
Of heaven's Keeper borne over the deep
Swiftly. The Life-giver, the angels' Lord,
Over the ample ground bade come forth light.
Quickly the high King's bidding was obeyed,
Over the waste there shone light's holy ray.
Then parted He, Lord of triumphant might,
Shadow from shining, darkness from the light.
Light, by the word of God, was first named day.¹

¹ Translated by Gummere.

Satan's Presumption and Fall

Note here how startlingly similar are some phrases in "Paradise Lost" to some of the phrases in this old majestic rendering. Caedmon, as well as Milton, had the creative imagination.

MUCH spake the angel of presumption, thought
Through his own craft to make a stronger
throne

Higher in heaven. His mind urged him, he said,
That north and south he should begin to work,
Found buildings; said he questioned whether he
Would serve God.

"Wherefore", he said, "shall I toil?
No need have I of master. I can work
With my own hands great marvels, and have power
To build a throne more worthy of a God
Higher in heaven. Why shall I for his smile
Serve Him, bend to Him thus in vassalage?
I may be God as He."

* * * * *

When the Almighty heard
How with great pride his angel raised himself
Against his Lord, foolishly spake high words
Against the supreme Father, he that deed
Must expiate, and in the work of strife
Receive his portion, take for punishment
Utmost perdition. So doth every man
Who sets himself in battle against God,
In sinful strife against the Lord most high.

Then was the Mighty wroth: Heaven's highest Lord
Cast him from his high seat, for he had brought

CAEDMON

His Master's hate on him. His favor lost,
The Good was angered against him, and he
Must therefore seek the depth of Hell's fierce pains,
Because he strove against Heaven's highest Lord,
Who shook him from his favor, cast him down
To the deep dales of Hell, where he became
Devil. The fiend with all his comrades fell
From Heaven, angels, for three nights and days,
From Heaven to Hell, where the Lord changed them all
To devils, because they his deed and word
Refused to worship. Therefore in worse light
Under the earth beneath, almighty God
Had placed them triumphless in the swart hell.

There evening, immeasurably long,
Brings to each fiend renewal of the fire;
Then comes, at dawn, the east wind keen with frost;
Its dart, or fire continual, torment sharp,
The punishment wrought for them, they must endure.¹

¹ Translated by Morley.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND, 9TH OR 10TH CENTURY

From "The Grave"

ADAPTED FROM LONGFELLOW'S TRANSLATION

FOR thee was a house built
Ere thou wert born:
For thee was a mold shapen
Ere thou camest from thy mother.

ANONYMOUS

Its height is not determined,
Nor is its depth measured;
Nor is it closed up,
Until I bring thee where thou shalt remain—
Until I shall measure thee and the sod of the earth.

Thy house is not highly timbered:
It is unhigh and low.
When thou art in it,
The heel-ways are low, the side-ways unhigh.
The roof is built thy breast full nigh;
So thou shalt in earth dwell full cold,
Dim and dark.
Doorless is that house
And dark is it within.
There thou art fast detained
And Death holds the key.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND, ABOUT 1250

Cuckoo Song

Modernized by E. M.

SUMMER is a-coming in:
Loud sing cuckoo.
Groweth seed and bloweth mead,
And springeth the wood anew.
Sing cuckoo!

ANONYMOUS

Ewe bleateth after lamb,
Loweth after calf the cow,
Bullock starteth, buck verteth:
Merry sing cuckoo!

Cuckoo, cuckoo, well singest thou, cuckoo:
Nor cease thou never now:
Sing cuckoo, now, sing cuckoo,
Sing cuckoo, sing cuckoo, now!

ROBERT MANNYNG, OF BRUNNE
ENGLAND, 1260-1340

Praise of Women

NO thyng ys to man so dere
As wommanys love in gode manèr.
A gode womman is mannys blys,
There her love right and stedfast ys.
There ys no solas under hevene
Of alle that a man may nevene¹
That shulde a man so moche glew²
As a gode womman that loveth true.
Ne derer is none in Goddis hurde³
Than a chaste womman with lovely worde.

¹ name.

² gladden.

³ flock.

RICHARD ROLLE, OF HAMPOLE
ENGLAND, ABOUT 1300-1349

Love

LOVE is a light burthen; love gladdens young and old;

Love is withouten pine, as lovers have me told;
Love is a ghostly wine that makes men big and bold;
Of love shall he nothing tine that it in heart will hold.

Love is the sweetest thing that man in earth has ta'en;
Love is God's darling, love binds blood and bane.
In love be our liking; I wot no better wane¹
For me and my loving; Love makes both be anc.²

¹ won through.

² one.

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, LATE 13TH CENTURY¹

From "The Debate of the Body and the Soul"

This poem is highly interesting as a historic document showing the irrational and horrific ideas of God and Hell prevalent in those early centuries. We get in it a vivid sense of medieval court life and of the terrors believed to be lurking behind the Veil. It opens with a vivid picture of the feudal life of knight and castle. The wit and wisdom in the thrust and parry of debate, strike out sparks of fire.

The famous American poem, "The Day of Doom," by Michael Wigglesworth—the best-known poem of Colonial times—has the same smack of brimstone found in "The Debate." The two poems are closely related in the fact that the hero in each case condemns God for the predestination that sends a soul to flaming perdition.

This crude and cruel idea of Hell persisted nearly everywhere down to the eighteenth century, when Emanuel Swedenborg—in his remarkable volume, "Heaven and Hell"—flung the light of reason upon this planetary darkness. He made it plain that hell-fire is evil desire. He made it plain that men—both here and hereafter—create their own miseries, their own perditions. It is reasonable to believe that men hereafter—as on earth—will gravitate to the places they are prepared to enjoy—the evil to the evil, the good to the good. In this we see the origin of all hells and of all heavens. There seems to be no arbitrary Power forcing men into perdition. In the light of this

¹ Modernized by Jessie L. Weston, with a few slight revisions by E. M.

ANONYMOUS

philosophy, a man goes to Hell because he wants to: he prefers it to Heaven. Hell is the heaven of the selfish.

IT chanced, as on a winter's night,
I drowsing lay, ere dawn of day,
Methought I saw a wondrous sight—
Upon a bier a Body lay,
That erst had been a haughty knight,
Who God would neither praise nor pray:
Now was he reft of this life's light,
His Spirit, freed, must hence away.

But ere that Spirit far would roam
It turned, and, by the bier it stood,
Beheld the Body, erst its home,
In sorrowful and dreary mood:
"Ah, wellaway!" it made its moan—
"Woe worth thy flesh, woe worth thy blood,
Thou wretched Body, now alone
Dost lie, who wast so wild and wood!"¹

"Thou that wast wont afield to ride,
On warlike steed, 'mid courtly crowd,
Of stature tall, in garment wide,
Even as a lion fierce and proud,
Where now is all thy mickle pride,
Thy boastful speech, ere-while so loud?
Thou liest bare, hast naught beside
One garment poor, and that a shroud!

"Where be thy castles, where they towers,
Thy chambers and thy stately halls?
Whose walls were painted fair with flowers?
And where thy rich apparel all?

¹ wood, in those early times, meant mad.

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Where be thy couches, where thy bowers?
Thy sendals, and thy costly palls?
Sorrow awaiteth thee as dower,
With morn thy fate shall thee befall.

“Where now are all thy goodly weeds?
The sumpter-mules that bare thy bed?
Thy palfreys, and thy noble steeds,
By hand of goodly pages led?
The hawks that thou wast wont to feed?
The hounds that swift behind thee sped?
Methinks God bringeth thee to need
Since all thy friends be from thee fled!

“Where be thy cooks who served thee well,
And dainty meats did aye prepare,
With fragrant spices sweet to smell?
Methinks thou wast aye full of care
To make that flesh with fatness swell
Which now shall be the foul worm’s fare.
Henceforth, methinks, the pains of Hell,
For gluttony shall be thy share!”

“To serve thee, Soul, was all my bent,
Alike at even and at morn,
Ever I sought for thy content,
Even from the time that thou wast born:
Thou who to judge my deeds wast lent,
Why didst thou not thy comrade warn?
Thou sawest me on folly bent,
Now of thyself art thou forlorn!”

The Soul it quoth: “Body, lie still,
Who now hath taught thee all this wit?
Thou chidest me with words at will

ANONYMOUS

Tho' swollen as by viper bit!
Thinkest thou, wretch, that tho' thou fill
With that foul flesh of thine a pit,
Of all the deeds thou wrought of ill
That thou so lightly shalt be quit?

"Thinkest thou peace with God to win
When as thou liest low in clay?—
Tho' thou be rotted bone and skin,
And blown upon the blast away,
Yet shalt thou come with joint and limb
Again to me on Judgment Day;
We twain to God's high court must win
Together take our bitter pay!

"Whenas I thought to tame and teach
Of what was ill and what was good,
Of Christ and kirk would'st hear no speech,
Didst start and shy, as wild and wood!
Enow I then might pray and preach,
But ne'er a jot might turn thy mood,
To God thy knowledge ne'er might reach,
Thou didst what in thy heart first stood."

The Body quoth: "Now this I say,
Soul, thou hast done me wrong, I wis,
When thou the blame on me dost lay
That thou, thro' me, hast lost thy bliss.
Where have I fared, by wood or way,
Or sat, or stood, or wrought amiss,
When I beyond thy glance did stray?
Well dost thou know the truth of this!

"How might I know or wrong or right,
What I should take, and what should shun,

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Save thou didst set it in my sight,
Thou who alone hadst wisdom won?
If thou against my will didst fight,
And bid me for misdeed make moan,
Thereafter did I strive with might
To do what pleased me alone!

"Soul, thou shouldst not for life nor land,
Nor profit that thou here couldst win,
Have suffered me to lend a hand
To that which turns to shame or sin.
But thou wast easy to withstand:
Thy wit and wisdom, I found thin
And yielding, even as hazel-wand:
To mend I never might begin!

"To sin thou knewest I aye inclined,
Forsooth with man 'tis ever so!
On this poor world I set my mind,
Followed the Fiend who is our foe.
Thou should'st have striven my will to bind,
When I mis-wrought have done me woe:
As when the blind doth lead the blind
We both in ditch are fallen low!"

But then the Soul 'gan weep full sore,
And sighed "Ah, Body, Alas! Alas!
My love I set on thee of yore
Since all my pains *sans* profit pass!
The Fiend of Hell, who e'er doth try
To snare mankind, his plots he laid,
Dwelt in us twain, methinks, as spy,
When to good deeds I thee had prayed.

ANONYMOUS

"And when I bade thee leave thy pride,
Thy many meats, thy harness stout,
The World stood ever at thy side
And bade thee all my warnings flout,
And garb thy Flesh in rich robes wide,
Not as a beggar in a clout,
And high on warlike steed to ride
With knightly comrades in and out!

"Tho' all the men that be on life
Were priests, and Mass for thee would sing,
And every maid, and every wife,
A widow, hands for grief to wring—
And every one, methinks, were five,
And in this world five-fold each thing,
We never might hope ourselves to shrive,
And none to bliss us twain might bring!

"Body, no longer may I dwell,
Nor linger here to speak with thee:
The hounds of Hell, I hear them yell,
And devils, more than man may see:
They come to carry me to Hell,
I may in no wise from them flee:
With flesh and bone, I rede thee well,
At Doomsday shalt thou come to me!"

And scarce the Soul had spake this word,
(Who wist right well where it must go)
When in there rushed a hideous horde,
Full thousand devils, all a-row.
With talons sharp the Soul they clawed,
In woe their grip it needs must know;
A sorry sight it did afford
Whenas they haled it to and fro.

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For they were rugged, rough, and tailed,
With hunches huge upon their back:
Long were their claws, and sharply nailed,
And never a limb such gear did lack!
On all sides was the Soul assailed
By many a devil, foul and black:
Its prayers for mercy naught availed,
For Christ his vengeance would not slack.

Then glowing glaves, methinks, they set
To back, and breast, and to each side:
The points, within his heart they met
And made him wounds both deep and wide.
They quoth: "Full well we'll plague thee yet,
Thou heart that wast so full of pride:
That which was promised shalt thou get,
And more, and worse, shall thee betide!"

They said that goodly weeds to wear
That were the thing he loved the best;
In quenchless cope they robed him there,
All burning bright—with mocking jest!
With red-hot clasps that gleamed a-flare
They fitted it to back and breast:
A helmet that was none too fair
Anon upon his head they prest.

Then forth they brought, with mickle pride,
A cursèd devil, as a foal,
That gnashed and gaped, with jaws full wide,
Where-from both smoke and flame did roll.
The saddle that he should bestride
Of sharp pikes, pointed, bare its toll,
Jagged as a hedge whereon to ride,
And all was glowing as a coal!

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Upon that saddle he was slung
As one who should to Tourney fare,
A hundred devils on him hung,
And, ruthless, dragged him here and there.
With fiery spears his flesh they stung;
Anon with hooks they catch and tear:
At every blow the sparks they sprung,
As when men forge a red-hot share.

When to Hell's grisley goal they won
The fiends, they set up such a yell,
The earth, it opened wide anon;
Smoother and smoke thereout did well;
With stench of pitch: and eke brimstone,
Men five miles off might know the smell.
Ah, Lord! That man is woe-begone
Who to his share one tithe may tell!

But when the Soul had come so nigh
And knew its goal, it cried in woe,
And quoth: "Thou Christ, Who sit'st on high,
Upon Thy sheep now mercy shew!
Didst Thou not shape me, verily?
Thy creature was I here below,
Even as those souls who sit Thee nigh,
To whom Thou dost such favor shew!

"Thou knowest all things, eve and morn,
Why wrought'st Thou me for bale alway,
That I should thus be tugged and torn,
While others have such goodly pay?
They that are doomed to be forlorn,
Wretches Thou mightest cast away:
Why dost thou let them ever be born
To give the Fiend such goodly prey?"

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The fiends against him clamoured high:
"Wretch, it availeth thee no more
To raise to Christ thy piteous cry
Or Mary Mother to implore;
For thou hast lost their company,
Since thou hast served us well of yore:
Thou needs must find such hostelry
As those who well have learned our lore!"

The foul fiends all, as they were fain,
Anon upon the soul they fell,
And cast it down, with might and main,
Into the deepest pit of Hell.
The sun's light shall he seek in vain:
Where he hath sunken must he dwell,
The earth hath closed o'er him again,
The dungeon gates are locked full well!

*(He who beheld that vision sore
Lo! he speaketh somewhat more!)*

When they had borne that evil load
Unto Hell's gates, ere dawn of day,
On every hair a drop it stood
For very dread as there I lay.
To Jesus Christ, with humble mood,
My soul it yearned, and fain would pray,
As when the Foul Fiend's noisome brood
Were come to carry me away!

I thanked Him Who His Blood did spill
On Rood, and torment for us bore,
Who shieldeth me from many an ill
Which for my sins had lain in store.

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All sinful souls I rede them still
To shrive them, and do penance sore;
Never may sin a measure fill
But that Christ's mercy shall be more!

(Christ His Grace to him impart
Who with hand this tale hath writ,
That he serve with perfect heart
Father, Son and Spirit!)

WILLIAM LANGLAND

ENGLAND, 1330-1400?

A POEM "not only strange" but "likewise grand and beautiful" was written during the lifetime of Chaucer by a man concerning whose life we know only the scantiest facts, and those from the poem itself. Langland (if that was his name) affords contrast to his contemporary Chaucer in almost every particular.

Chaucer, for all his universality, had an audience of courtly readers. But Langland writes rather for the mass of the common folk, seeking the ear of men of good will; for the subject of his poem, *The Vision of Piers the Plowman*, involves the social and religious condition of the poor in England during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II. He has no clever turns of phrase; all is blunt, straightforward, intended to enlighten, not to dazzle. Moreover, he is an intensely English poet; his insularity is in sharp contrast to Chaucer's admixture of ideas from other literatures. The melancholy of the Saxon is infused into the *Vision*, although it is the melancholy which broods but does not despair:

"For at the charnel house at the church it is hard to
know churls,
Or a knight from a knave there: know this in thy
heart."

WILLIAM LANGLAND

Piers the Plowman is the name given by Langland to the reformer who was to bring in the new social era of justice, "the name to signify that great results can often be achieved by humble means; and perhaps as hinting, at the same time, that if the laboring classes were to expect any great improvement to take place in their condition, they had best consider what they could do to help themselves." Later, in the revised work, Piers the Plowman takes on a spiritual guise; the Plowman becomes the Good Samaritan, becomes the Saviour Himself.

There was a good deal of the Puritan in Langland; yet he was not so much averse to pleasures as to hypocrisy. His "fundamental indignation" is directed against shams. He hurls his contempts and curses against Fals-Semblant, the king who rules contrary to conscience—against the heartless man of law; the merchant without honesty; the friar, the pardoner, the hermit, who conceal, under the garment of saints, hearts that will rank them with the accursed ones. Fals-Semblant is the pope who sells benefices; also the histrion, the tumbler, the juggler, the adept of the vagrant race, who goes about telling tales and helping his listeners to forget the seriousness of life. "From the unworthy pope down to the lying juggler, all these men are the same man. Deceit stands before us; God's judgment be upon him!"

In the passage which is printed below, note the fashion of the lines, the rigid abstinence from rhyme, the inequality of length, and the middle pause which binds the measure. In the process of modernization it has been impossible for me to retain all the original accents and all the alliteration. Yet it is clear that however much the artistry of this verse may be inferior to Chaucer's, nevertheless the lines swing and sway along, and get over the ground.

This prologue opens the poem. In it the poet himself sees the vision of Heaven (the high tower) Hell (the deep dungeon) and Earth (the "fair field of folk"). The picture of the world which forms the substance of

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the extract has much verve and stir in it, with many effective satiric touches.

From the Prologue of "The Vision of Piers the Plowman"

Modernized

IN a summer season, when soft was the sun,
I clad myself coarsely as I a shepherd were:
In habit as an hermit unholy of works,
Went I wide in this world wonders to hear.
And on a May morning on Malvern Hills,
Befell me a wonder of fairy, I thought.
I was weary, far-wandered, and went me to rest
Under a broad bank by a burn-side;
And as I lay and leaned and looked on the waters,
I slumbered into a sleeping, it sounded so merry.
Then gan I to dream a wonderful dream
That I wandered a wilderness, wist I never where.
As I beheld into the East on high to the sun,
I saw a tower on a hill-top, splendidly built,
A deep dale beneath, a donjon therein,
With deep ditches and dark, and dreadful of sight.
A fair field full of folk I found there between,
Of all manner of men, the mean and the rich,
Working and wandering as the world asketh.
Some put them to the plough, and played full seldom,
In setting and sowing they labored full hard,
Winning what wasters with gluttony destroy.
And some put them to pride, apparelled them there-
after,
In countenance of clothing strangely disguised.

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To prayers and penances many applied them:
All for the love of our Lord living full strictly,
In hope to have hereafter heaven-kingdom bliss:
As anchorites and hermits that keep in their cells
And covet naught in the country to gad all about,
By no luxurious living their body to please.
And some chose to chaffer, their chances to better,
For it seemed to my sight that such men most thrive;
And some made mirth as minstrels are able,
And got gold with their glee, guiltless, I deem them.
But jesters and jugglers, Judas's children,
Feigned them fantasies and made themselves fools,
Yet have wit at will to work if they need.
I dare not prove here that Paul of them preaches:
For "Whoso speaks shameful speech" is Lucifer's hind.
Beggars and petitioners right busily wandered,
With their bellies and their bags of bread fully-
crammed,
Flattered for their food, fought at the ale-house.
In gluttony, God wot, go they to bed,
And rise with ribaldry, these Robert's knaves:¹
Sleep and sorry sloth pursue them forever.
Pilgrims and palmers plighted them together
For to seek Saint Jame and saints at Rome:
They went forth on their way with many wise tales,
And had leave to lie all their lives after.
I saw some that said they had sought out the saints:
In every tale told their tongues were trained to lie
More than to say sooth, it seemed by their speech.
Hermits in a crowd with hookèd staves
Wended to Walsingham, and their wenches came after.
Great lubbers and long that loath were to work
Clothed them in copes to be counted as brethren
And habited themselves hermits their ease for to have.

¹ vagabonds.

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I found there the friars of all the four orders,
Preaching to the people for profit of themselves:
They glosed the gospel as seemed to them good;
For covetousness of copes, they construed as they
would.

Many of these masters now clothe them to their liking,
For their money and merchandise marchen together.
For since Charity has been chapman and chief in
shriving lords,

Many marvels have befallen in a few years.
There preached a pardoner¹ as if he were a priest,
Brought forth a bull with many bishops' seals,
And said that himself might absolve them all
For breaking of fast-days and vows they had broken.
Laymen loved it well and liked his words,
Came up to him kneeling and kissed the bulls.
He stopped their mouths with his brief and bleared
their eyes

And gained with his register rings and brooches.
Thus they give up their gold these gluttons to keep,
And grant it to losels² as lechery hunt.
Were the bishop y-blessèd and worth both his ears
He would not send his seal for deceiving the people,
Yet not against the bishop the pardoner preaches,
But the parish priest and the pardoner part the silver
That the poor of the parish would have, but for them.

* * * * *

Yet hovered a hundred in coifs of silk,
Serjeants, it seemed, that served at the bar
And pleaded the law for pennies and pounds,
But not once loose their lips for love of our Lord.

¹ a seller of Papal indulgences.

² worthless fellows.

WILLIAM LANGLAND

You might better measure mist on Malvern Hills
Then get a mumble from their mouths until money be
shown.

* * * * *

Bakers and brewers and butchers a-many
Websters of wool and websters of linen.
Tailors and tinkers and toll-takers in markets,
Masons and miners and many a craft.
Of all sorts of laborers went about some,
Such as ditchers and delvers that do their deeds ill
And drag out the long day in "God save you, Dame
Emma."¹

Cooks and their knaves cried, "Hot pies, hot!
Good geese and pigs! Come out to dine!"
Taverners in turn with them shouted the song,
"White wine of Alsace and red wine of Gascoigne,
Wine of the Rhine and of Rochelle to wash down the
roast!"

All this I saw sleeping, and seven times more.

¹ The refrain of a popular song.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

ENGLAND, 1340-1400

IN 1592, Robert Greene, a poet-contemporary of Shakespeare, pictured Chaucer in verse:

“His stature was not very tall;
Lean he was; his legs were small,
Hosed within a stock of red;
A buttoned bonnet on his head,
From under which did hang, I ween,
Silver hairs both bright and sheen;
His beard was white trimmèd round;
His countenance blithe and merry found;
A sleeveless jacket, large and wide,
With many plaits and skirts beside,
Of water-camlet did he wear;
A whittle by his belt he bear;
His shoes were cornèd, broad before;
His ink-horn at his side he wore,
And in his hand he bore a book—
Thus did this ancient poet look.”

Chaucer, the “father of English Songs”, was at various times of his life a courtier, a student, a soldier, a diplomat, and a man of business. Probably no other poet of the first order ever led so active and varied a life. As John Dryden observed, in 1700: “Chaucer must have been a man of most wonderful comprehensive nature, because he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humors of the whole English nation of his time. Not a single character has escaped him, unless we except the aristocrats and the poverty-

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stricken ones. All his pilgrims are distinguished from one another, not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons."

A century later, William Blake acclaimed Chaucer as "the great poetical observer of men, the man who in every age is born to record and eternize its acts." Yes, and Chaucer looked down on gentles and churls alike—sometimes with severity, but more often with a friendly and fatherly eye. He has little or none of the stern temper of Wyckliffe in religious radicalism, and little or none of the fiery indignation of Langland over social injustice.

Before the advent of Chaucer, Britain possessed an extensive literature, largely in verse; but this verse was a farrago of dialects, forms, treatments, with no sure aim or touch, no perspective view, and, above all, no self-critical control. In this vast welter moved lyric and allegory, realistic fable and visionary romance, moral preachment and lusty humor. This old poetry is not utterly lacking in glints of beauty, moments of grace and glamor. But there had been no commanding mind to harmonize and humanize the old chaotic forms and forces, to look on them shrewdly as a whole—no mind until Chaucer appeared.

He came dowered with the poetic mystery; and suddenly England thrilled with a new poetry that danced from heart to heart. He came with a new meter, a new rhythm, a new sense of the inevitable word, a new feeling for freshness and fluidity of phrase.

How did he use these powers to rescue the native language from a Babel of confusion, banish uncouth Anglo-Saxon terms, soften our tongue with words of Norman beauty? He used for this transformation the magic rod of characterization.

His tales have an undying interest for us only because they fling vividly forth the actions and passions of men and women known to us all. He has made live forever the knight, the squire, the clerk, the monk, the parson, the summoner, the prioress. At last we sense in literature

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the feel of life, the smack of the soil, the flavor of the common human experience.

How does Chaucer (how does any writer) give us this feel of life? By exciting in us strong feeling, feeling that gives us the freshness and hot impact of reality.

To give us this feeling, the writer must see persons and events in a warmly individual way. He avoids abstractions, making things strictly specific, severely concrete. He speaks of the thud of the ax, not of the sound of the ax. He speaks in terms of direct sensation.

There are stories in life all around us, but they are hidden by a mass of irrelevant detail. The writer must ignore this mass; and he must throw his character and his incident into a high light by choosing the suggestive detail, the dramatic and stirring fact. Thus the great writer makes us see things in sharp outline, in vivid individuality; and we come from his pages with a keen sense of the warmth and color of life.

We get the feel of this in Chaucer's oily-faced monk—in his yeoman, who is a forester and has "a head like a nut"—in his miller who is as brisk as the morning air—in his lisping friar who makes confession easy for the ladies—in his steward who shaves his beard as closely as he shaves the tenants of his master. We get the feel of it in this full length portrait of a monk in one line,

"Fat as a whale, and walkèd as a swan."

We get it in the opening lines of *The Parliament of Fowls*:

"The life so short, the craft so long to learn,
The essay so hard, so sharp the conquering,
The dreadful joys always that flit so yerne—
All this I mean by love."

We get it in the pardoner telling of his way of preaching:

"Lordings," quoth he, "in churchē when I preach,
I make a point to have a noisy speech,

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And ring it out as round as goes a bell,
For I know all by rote that I tell.
My theme is always one, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.

* * * * *

Then I make point to stretchen forth my neck,
And east and west upon the people I beck,
As doth a dove sitting upon a barn."

As with Shakespeare, it is hard to decide whether Chaucer is greatest in humor or in pathos. When Griselda is told by her husband that she must return to her father to make room for her successor, she cries out:

"I never held me lady nor mistréss,
But humble servant to your worthiness,
And ever shall, while that my life may dure,
Aboven every worldly créature.

* * * * *

O goodè God! how gentle and how kind
Ye seemèd by your speech and your viságe
The day that makèd was our marriáge!"

We also get the warmth of life in that cry of romantic love from the wistful lips of the waiting Troilus after his unfaithful Cressida had left him to go to Diomed in the Grecian camp:

"And every night as was his wont to do,
He stood, the bright moon shining to behold,
And all his sorrow to the moon he told,
And said: 'Surely when thou art horned anew,
I shall be glad—if *all the world be true!*' "

Chaucer is linked to the romantic age by his broad jokes, his occasional indelicacies of phrase, but especially by his gorgeous imagery as in the following:

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"There mayst thou see coming with Palamon
Licurge himself, the greatē King of Thrace.
Black was his beard and manly was his face:
The circles of his eyen in his head
They gloweden betwixten yellow and red,
And like a griffon lookèd he about,
With combèd hairēs on his browēs stout;
His limbēs great, his brawnēs hard and strong,
His shoulders broad, his armēs round and long;
And as the guisē was in his countree,
Full high upon a car of gold stood he,
With fourē whitē bullēs in the trace.
A hundred lordēs had he in his rout
Armèd full well, with heartēs stern and stout.
With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The great Emetrius the King of Ind,
Upon a steedē bay, trappèd in steel,
Covered with cloth of gold diapered wele,
Came riding like the god of Armēs, Mars;
His coat armor was of a cloth of Tars,
Trimmèd with pearlēs white, and round, and great;
His saddle was of burnt gold newly beat;
A mantelet upon his shoulders hanging
Brīmful of rubies red, as fire sparkling;
His crispē hair like ringēs was yrun,
And that was yellow, and glittered as the sun;
His voice was as a trumpē thundering."

Chaucer drew his first inspiration from the French romance poetry, which in his early life was the chief reading in courtly circles. But after he had visited enchanting Italy, he took his models chiefly from that land of the nightingales. Yet it was the blithe Boccaccio that kindled his imagination, rather than the austere Dante or the sentimental Petrarch.

Chaucer was always a generous and genial borrower from other men's works. Yet he lent to whatever he borrowed a substance from his own imagination, which

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made the borrowed thing his own. He took from the old romances their fine extravagances, not their trivial and extraneous aspects. He snatched from the French stories their gayety and quiet commentary, rejecting their tedious features. He tempered the gay carelessness of the Italian stories with his English sobriety.

The Canterbury Tales, his later work, sums up the beauties and felicities of all his previous poems. Like his earlier work, these tales depend largely on bookish sources; but never did a poet write stories with less of the bookworm canker and more of the light and gust of open air. They have delighted the centuries.

It is chiefly in picturing this motley and immortal pilgrimage to Canterbury that Chaucer breaks from the old literary leanings to caste and class and becomes truly English and distinctly national. He is at last a keen catholic observer of the many-colored procession of life as it moves before his all-devouring eye.

While his characters are struck out sharply in clear light, his landscapes have not the freshness of later poets. Indeed, Theocritus, a thousand years earlier, surpasses him in this fresh feeling for nature.

Moralists—those who believe that artistic reserves help to preserve public decency—shrink from some of Chaucer's plain blunt speaking. Some of his merriment, at once hearty and sly, has the free speaking of his age. But he pleads that in all this he is forced to adjust the tale to the teller. In spite of his occasional coarseness, his sympathies are with virtue and nobility. His real delight is in the fun—not in the filth. He has indeed been called a moralist, although a happy and humorous one.

We see Chaucer mixing with all, understanding all, at home with all. While he loves manly hilarity and is ever ready to look with a tolerant eye on the mosaic of life, he still has a hot dislike of one thing—hypocrisy.

But Chaucer is lacking in one direction: he lacks the high seriousness of the great world poets, who are vibrant with the mighty hopes and dreams that make us men. He does not come with any interpretation of the enigma.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

He does not seem to sense any divine significance in this mortal struggle—does not stir us with any aspiration for a nobler order of life than earth supplies. He does not seem to see this world as the time-vesture of the Eternal. He never recognizes

“The voice mysterious, which whoso hears
Must think on what will be and what has been.”

However, we can never forget how he brings back the springtide of our being and how he refines for us the passion of romantic love. We can never forget how—second only to Shakespeare—he holds up for our delight that fine mirror of human manners, and projects before us those vivid pictures of character that are imperishable.

Good Counseil of Chaucer

John Masefield says that the poetry of Chaucer—this poem in particular—opened his eyes to the fact that the office of the poet is “a holy one.” It was while Masefield was employed in a carpet factory in Yonkers, New York, that he happened upon a copy of Chaucer’s poems in a local bookstore. Until that time he had never thought seriously of writing poetry; but this chance contact with “the father of English song” changed the whole course of his life. Chaucer became his Bible.

FLE fro the pres, and dwelle with sothfastnesse;
Sufficē thee thy good, though hit be smal;
For hord hath hate, and clymyng tikelnesse,¹
Pres hath envye, and wele blent over al.²
Savour no more then thee behovē shal;
Do wel thy-self that other folk canst rede,
And trouthe thee shal delyver, hit ys no drede.³

¹ insecurity.

² wealth everywhere blinds people.

³ there is no doubt.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Peynē thee not eche croked to redresse
In trust of hir that turneth as a bal,¹
Gret restē stant in lytil besynesse;
Bewar also to spurne ayein a nal,²
Stryve not as doth a crokkē with a wal;³
Dauntē thy-selfe that dauntest otheres dede,
And trouthe thee shal delyver, hit ys no drede.

¹ i.e. Fortune.

² an awl.

³ i.e. as weak does with strong.

From the Prologue to "The Canterbury Tales"

Chaucer is the first great poet singing out of the misty morning of English song. He formed the matrix for our English language. He was the first molder of our heroic couplet, and the first poet to breathe into his verse the fragrance of the earth and the glow of the skies. Take this, for example:

WHANNE that Aprille with his shoures sote
The droughte of Marche hath percēd to
the rote,
And bathēd every veine in swiche licour,
Of whiche vertue engendred is the flour
Whan Zephirus eke with his sote brethe
Enspired hath in every holt and hethe
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y ronne,
And smale foules maken melodie,
That slepen alle night with open eye,
So priketh hem nature in her corages,
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

You doubtless find this Middle English difficult reading; so I am giving you my own modernized versions. Although the spelling of Chaucer is here much modernized, a superfluous e is retained, because the rhythm requires that it should be pronounced. You will find in these versions nearly all "the smack and tang" of the original. Rejoice therefore in these passages from "The Prologue," which give glimpses of the procession of pilgrims telling tales to shorten the way, as they ride down the English lanes and highways to the old cathedral at Canterbury.

WHEN that sweet April showers [with downward shoot]

The drouth of March has piercèd to the root,
 And bathèd every vein in such licoúr,
 Of which virtúe engendered is the flower;
 When Zephyrus also with his sweetë breath
 Inspirèd hath in every grove and heath
 The tender croppës, and the youngë sun
 Hath in the Ram one half his journey run,
 And smallë fowlës maken melody,
 That sleepen allë night with open eye;
 So pricketh them natúre in their coráges¹
 Then longen folk to go on pilgrimáges,
 And palmers for to seeken strangë lands.

It fell, within that season on a day
 In Southwark, at the Tabard as I lay,
 Ready to wenden on my pilgrimáge
 To Canterbury with devout coráge,
 At night was come into that hostelry
 Well nine-and-twenty in a company,
 Of sundry folk who thus had chanced to fall
 In fellowship; and pilgrims were they all,

¹ hearts.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

That now to Canterbury wouldeñ ride.
The chambers and the stables weren wide,
And well we weren easèd at the best.* * *

A knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the timē that he first began
To riden out, he lovèd chivalry,
Truth and honór, freedóm and courtesy.* * *
He was of port as meek as is a maid,
And never any villainy had said
In all his life, to any sort of wight:
He was a very perfect gentle knight.

With him there was his son, a youngē squire,
A lover and a lusty bachelor:
With lockēs curled as they were laid in press.
Of twenty years of age he was, I guess.
Embroidered was he as it were a mead,
All full of freshē flowers, white and red.
Singíng was he, or fluting all the day:
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, with sleevēs long and wide;
Well could he sit his horse, and fairē ride.
He couldē songēs make and well indite,
Joust and eke dance, and well portray and write.
So well he loved, that in the nightertale¹
He slept no more than doth the nightingale.
Courteous he was, lowly and serviceable,
And carved before his father at the table.

There was also a Nun, a Prioress
That of her smiling was full simple and coy;
Her greatest oath was but "by Saint Eloy";
And she was callèd Madam Eglantine.

¹ night-time.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Full well she sang the servicë divine,
Entuned in her nose full sweetly.
At meat she was well mannerëd withal:
She let no morsel from her lippës fall,
Nor wet her fingers in her saucë deep:
Well could she carry a morsel, and well keep,
That no drop ever fall upon her breast.
In courtesy was set full much her zest.
Her over-lippë wipèd she so clean,
That in her cup no particle was seen
Of grease when she had drunken of her cup.
Full seemëly her meat she lifted up;
And of a truth she was of great disport,
Pleasant to all and amiable of port.
Yet she took pains to counterfeit the cheer
Of court, and like a stately dame appear,
And to be holden worth our reverence.
But for to speaken of her consciëce,
She was so charitable and so piteous
She wouldë weep if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
Of smallë houndës had she that she fed
With roasted flesh and milk and fine white bread;
But sore she wept if one of them were dead,
Or if men smote it with a cudgel smart;
And all was consciëce and tender heart.
Full seemëly her wimple pinchèd was;
Her nose was straight; her eyes were grey as glass;
Her mouth full small, and thereto soft and red;
But certainly she had a fair foreheäd.
It was almost a spannë broad I trow,
For certainly she was not undergrown.
Full handsome was her cloak, as I was 'ware.
Of small coräl about her arm she bare
A pair of bedës, gauded all with green;

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

And thereon hung a broach of gold full shene,
On which was first writtén a crownèd A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

A Monk there was, of skill and mastery proved;
A bold one at a leap, who hunting loved;
A manly man, to be an abbot able.
Full many a dainty horse had he in stable;
And when he rode, men might his bridle hear,
Jingling in a whistling wind as clear,
And eke as loud as doth the chapel bell,
Where reigned he lord o'er many a holy cell.
I saw his sleevës purpled at the hand
With fur, and that the finest of the land.
And for to keep his hood beneath his chin,
He had of beaten gold a curious pin:
A love-knot at the greater end there was.
His head was bald, and shone as any glass;
And eke his face, as it had been anoint:
He was a lord full fat, and in good point.
His eyes were deep, and rolling in his head,
Which steamed as a furnace melting lead;
His bootës supple, his horse in great estate.
Now certainly he was a fair prelâte.
He was not pale as a poor pining ghost:
A fat swan loved he best of any roast:
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.

A Friar there was, a wanton and a merry;
Licensed to beg, a wondrous solemn man.
In all the orders four is none that can
So much of dalliance and fair languáge.
Full many a marriage had he brought to bear
For women young, and paid the cost with sport.
Unto his order he was a rare support.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Full sweetly heard he confessiön,
And pleasant was his absolution.
He was an easy man in penance naming,
And knew that alms fell heavy from light blaming;¹
For unto a poor order for to give
Is signë that a man is wellë shrive. * * *
For many a man so hard is of his heart,
He will not weep, although he sorë smart;
Therefore, instead of weeping and prayéres
Men must give silver to the poor friars. * * *
Somewhat he lispèd for his wantonness
To make his English sweet upon his tongue;
And in his harping, when that he had sung,
His eyen twinkled in his head aright,
As do the starrës in a frosty night.

A clerk there was of Oxenford also,
Who unto logic had gone long ago.
As skinny was his horse as is a rake;
And the clerk was not right fat, I undertake.
For he had got him yet no benefice,
Nor was so worldly as to have office;
For he would rather have at his bed's head
A twenty bookës, clad in black or red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
Than robës rich or fiddle or psaltéry.
But all be that he was a philosópher,
Yet had but little riches in his coffer,
And all that might be by his friendës lent,
On bookës and on learning he it spent;
And busily began for souls to pray
Of them that gave him wherewith to study.
Of study took he mostë care and heed:

¹ Here in this modernized form we have a couplet that appears to me to be more sprightly and witty than the original.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Not a word spoke he morē than was need;
And that was said in form and reverence,
And short and quick, and full of high sentence.
Sounding in moral virtue was his speech
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.

A sergeant of the law who much did know,
And oft talkt law in St. Paul's portico,
Was also there full rich in excellence.
Discreet he was and of great reverence.
He seemèd such his wordēs were so wise.
Justice he often was in full assize.
For his sciēcē and his high renown,
Of fees and robēs had he many a one. * * *
Nowhere so busy a man as he there was;
And yet he seemèd busier than he was.

A good man there was of religiōn,
That was a poor PARSONĒ of a town;
But rich he was in holy thought and work,
He was also a learned man, a clerk,
That Christē's gospel truēly would preach:
His parishens devoutly would he teach,
Benigne he was and wondrous diligent,
And in adversity full patient:
And such he was yprovèd often times:
Full loth were he to cursen for his tithes.
But rather would he given, out of doubt,
Unto his poor parishioners about,
Of his offering, and eke of his substance;
He could in little thing have suffisānce.
Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,
But he nor felt nor thought of rain or thunder,
In sickness and in mischief to visit

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

The farthest in his parish, much and oft,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
This noble example to his sheep he gave,
That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.
Out of the Gospel he the wordës caught,
And this figure he added yet thereto,
That if gold rust, what sholdë iron do?
And if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,
No wonder if a common man do rust.
Well ought a priest example for to give,
By his cleannessë, how his sheep should live.
He settë not his benefice to hire,
Nor left his sheep bewildered in the mire,
And ran unto Londón, unto Saint Paul's,
To seeken him a chanterie for souls,
Or with a brotherhood to be withhold;
But dwelt at homë, and kept well his fold,
So that the wolf no made it not miscarry.
He was a shepherd and no mercenarie;
And though he holy were, and virtuous,
He was to sinful men not dispiteous,
Nor of his speechë dangerous nor high,
But in his teaching discrete and benigne.
To drawen folk to Heaven, with fairëness,
By good example, was his business.
But if were any person obstinate,
Whethér he were of high or low estate,
Him would he réprove sharply for the nones:
A better priest I trow that nowhere is.
He waited on no pomp nor reverence,
Nor makèd him no spicèd consciéce;
But Christë's lore and his Apostles twelve
He taught, but first he followed it himselve.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

The Friar's Tale

Slightly modernized by E. M.

A summoner, a church officer who cited offenders into the ecclesiastical court, once found himself riding in company with a devil, and made an agreement with him, which ended in a shock of surprise. The friars and the more dignified clergy—in Chaucer's time—were frequently at odds. Therefore it is a friar who relates the following amusing story, from which I have omitted only a negligible passage or two. I found it convenient in this version to mix the "thou" and the "you" forms, a procedure not inconsistent with the unsettled condition of English speech in the age of Chaucer. You will find "The Friar's Tale" sprinkled with the sly humor of the great poet. I hope that I have preserved in my version most, if not all, of the rich flavor of the original. Modernized versions of the Tales are now plentiful, yet usually they lack the quaintness of Chaucer's verse.

AND so befell that once upon a day
A summoner, waiting ever on his prey,
Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribbe,¹
Feigning a cause that he might have a bribe.
And happened that he saw before him ride
A gay yeoman under a forest side;
A bow he bore, and arrows bright and keen.
He had upon his back a cloak of green,
And on his head a hat with fringes black.

"Sir", quoth the summoner, "hail, well overtake."
"Welcome", quoth he, "and every good fellōw.
Where do you ride beneath this greenē shaw?²
And is it that thou ridest far today?"

¹ A sharp-toned musical instrument: hence, a scolding woman.

² a thicket, a copse.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

The summoner him answered and said, "Nay,
Here, fast by" (so he quoth) "is my intent
To riden for to reisen up a rent
Belonging to my lordës duëtee."

"Ah! are you then a bailiff?" "Yes", quoth he.
(He durst not, for the very filth and shame,
Say that he was a summoner, for the name.)
"*Depardieux!*" cried this yeoman, "dear brother,
You are a bailiff, and I am another.
I am unknowèn here in this countrée:
Of your acquaintance I will prayen thee,
And eke of brotherhood, if that thee list.
I have gold and silver lying in my chist:
If you should hap to come into our shire,
All shall be thine, right as you will desire."

"*Gramercy*", said this summoner, "by my faith!"
Each in the other's hand his trothë laith,
For to be swornë brethren till they die.
In dalliance they riden forth and play.
This summoner, who was as full of jangles
As full of venime¹ are these wariangales,²
And ever enquiring upon everything,
"Brother", quoth he, "where now is your dwelling,
Another day, if that I should you seek?"
This yeoman answered him in softë speech:
"Brother", quoth he, "far in the north countrée,
Wherein I hope sometime I shall you see.
Ere we depart, I shall you so well wisse,
That of my house not shall you ever miss."
"Now brother", quoth the summoner, "I pray,
Teach me, while that we riden by the way,
(Since that you are a bailiff as am I)
Some subtlety, and tell me faithfully

¹ spites.

² woodpeckers.

In my offíce how I may mostë win,
 And spare you not for consciëce or for sin,
 But, as my brother, tell me how do ye?"
 "Now, by my trothë, brother mine", said he,
 "As I shall tellen you a faithful tale,
 My wages are full strait and eke full smale.
 My lord is to me hard and dangerous,
 And my offíce is full laborious;
 And therefore by extortíon I live;
 Forsooth I take all that men will me give.
 At least by sleightë or by violence
 From year to year I win all my dispençe.
 I can no better tellen faithfully."

"Now certes", quoth the summoner, "so fare I:
 I sparë not to take a thing, God wot,
 Unless it be too heavy or too hot.
 What I may get in counsel privily,
 No manner consciëce of that have I:
 Without extortíon I might not liven,
 Nor of such cheatings will I not be shriven.
 Stomach nor consciëcë know I none:
 I curse these shrifting fathers, every one.
 Well are we met, by God and by Saint Jame!
 But, lovèd brother, tellen me thy namë,"
 The summoner said. Right in this menë-while
 This yeoman gan a little for to smile.
 "Brother", quoth he, "wish you that I shall tell?
 I am a fiend: my dwelling is in Hell!
 And here I ride about my purchasing,¹
 To learn where men will give me anything:
 My pickings are the source of all my rent.
 Look how thou ridest for the same intent:
 To winnen good, you reckon never how.

¹ pickings.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Right so fare I, for riden will I now
Unto the worldës endë for a preyë”.

“God bless you”! cried the summoner: “what say ye?
I thought you were a yeoman truëly:
You have a mannës shape as well as I.
Have you a figure then determinate
In Hellë, where you are in your estate?”
“Nay, certainly”, quoth he, “there have we none;
But when us liketh we can take us one,
Or ellës make you guess that we are shape
Sometimë like a man, sometimë ape,
Or like an angel can I ride or go:
It is no wonder thing though it be so.
A lousy jogelour can deceiven thee;
And, pardee, yet know I more craft than he.”

“Why”, quoth the summoner, “ride ye then or run
In sundry shapes, and not always in one?”
“For we”, quoth he, “will us such formë make
As most is able our preyë for to take.
Sometime we feign and sometime we arise
With deadë bodies in full sundry wise,
And speak as reasonable and fair and well
As to the Pythoness did Samuel;
And yet indeed some say it was not he:
I have no use for your divinity.
But I warn you one thing: I will not jape:¹
You will, be sure, know how that we be shape.
You shall hereafterward, my brother dear,
Come where you do not need my words to hear.
For you shall by your own experience
Know how to preach in pulpit this sentënce,²
Better than Virgil while he was alive,
Or Dant also. Now let us riden blive,³

¹ mock.

² subject for sermon.

³ quickly.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

For I will holden company with thee
Till it be so that thou forsakë me."

"Nay", quoth the summoner, "that shall not betide:
I am a yeoman that is knowen full wide.
My trothë will I hold to you, my brother,
As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
For to be truë brethren in this case,
And both we go abouten our purchåse.¹
Take you your part, what that men will thee give,
And I shall mine: thus may we bothë live;
And if that any of us have more than other,
Let him be true and halve it with his brother."
"I grant this", quoth the devil, "by my fay";
And with that word they riden forth their way.

And right at entering of the townës end,
To which this summoner shaped him for to wend,
They saw a cart that loaded was with hay,
Which that a carter drove forth on his way.
Deep was the mud; wherefore the cartë stood.
The carter smote and cried as he were wood,²
"Heit, Scot; heit, Brock; what, spare ye for the stones?
The fiend" (quoth he) "may fetch you, body and bones
As certainly as ever ye were foaled,
So much of woe as I have with you tholed.³
The devil have all, both horse and cart and hay."

The summoner said, "Here shall we have a prey."
And near the fiend he drew, as nothing were,
Full privily, and whispered in his ear:
"Hearken, my brother, hearken, by thy faith:
Do you not hear what thing the carter saith?
Seize it anon, for he hath given it thee,

¹ pickings.

² mad.

³ endured.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Both hay and cart, and eke his horses three."
"Nay", quoth the devil, "God wot, never a bit!
It is not his intent, trust me for it.
Axe him yourself, if you do not trust me,
Or ellës wait awhile, and you shall see."

This carter thwacked his horses on the croup,
And they began to drawen and to stoop.
"Heit now", quoth he, "there, Jesus Christ you bless,
And all his handiwork, both more and less!
That was well pulled, my owën Liard, boy.
I pray God save your body and Saint Eloy.
Now is my cart out of the slough, pardee."

"Lo, brother", quoth the fiend, "what told I thee?
Here may you see, my owën dear brothër,
The churl spoke one thing, but he thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our voyáge:
Here win I nothing upon this cariáge."¹

When they had comen somewhat out of town,
This summoner to his brother gan to rounē:²
"Brother", quoth he, "here dwelleth an old rebekke,³
That had almost as lief to lose her neck
As for to give a penny of her good.
I will have twelve-pence though that she be wood,⁴
Or I will summon her to our office;
And yet, God wot, of her I know no vice.
But if you cannot here in this countrée
Winnen thy costs, take here example of me."

The summoner clappeth at the widow's gate:
"Come out", he said, "you oldë reprobate:
I trow you have some friar or priest with thee."

¹ direction.

² whisper.

³ same as ribibe, a sharp-tongued woman.

⁴ mad.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

"Who clappeth?", said this wife, "*benedicite!*
God save you, sir, what is your sweetë will?"

"I have", quoth he, "of summons here a bill:
On pain of cursing, lookë that you be
Tomorrow before the archëdeacon's knee,
To answer to the court of certain things."
"Now, Lord", quoth she, "Christ Jesus, King of kings,
So help me verily, I never may:
I have been sick, and that full many a day.
I may not go so far", quoth she, "nor ride
But I be dead, so pricketh it my side.
May I not axe the libel, Sir Summoner,
And answer there by my procúrador
To any thing men would apposen me?"

"Yes", quoth the summoner, "pay anon: let's see—
Twelve pence to me, and I will give acquittal:
I shall no profit have thereby but little:
My master has the profit, and not I.
Come off, and let me riden hastily:
Give me twelve pence: I may no longer tarry."
"Twelve pence"! cried she. "Now Lady Saintë Mary
So safely help me out of care and sin,
This widë world though that I should it win,
I no have not twelve pence within my hold.
You knowen well that I am poor and old:
Bestow your alms on me, a poorë wretch."

"Nay then", quoth he, "the foulë fiend me fetch
If I excuse thee, though thou shouldst be spilt."
"Alas", quoth she, "God wot I have no guilt."

"Pay me", quoth he, "or by the sweet Saint Anne
Carry I will away your newë pan

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

For debtē which thou owest me of old,
When that thou madest thy husband cuckēold,
I paid at home for thy correction."

"Thou liest", cried she, "by my salvation:
Not was I never or now, widow or wife,
Summoned into your court in all my life,
And never I was but of my body true.
Unto the devil, rough and black of hue,
Give I your body and my pan also!"

And when the devil heard her cursen so
Upon her knees, he said in this mannér:
"Now, Mabily, my owën modder dear,
Is this your will in earnest that you say?"
"The devil", quoth she, "fetch him before he die,
And pan and all, if he will not repent."

"Nay, old weasél, that is not my intent",
The summoner said, "for to repenten me
For anything that I have had of thee:
I would I had thy smock and all thy cloth."

"Now, brother", quoth the devil, "be not wroth:
Your body and this pan are mine by right.
You shall go into Hell with me tonight,
Where you will knowen of our privy
More than a master of divinity."

And with that word the foulē fiend him hent¹
Body and soul: he with the devil went
Wherē these summoners have their heritage.

¹ seized.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Death and the Ruffians

BEING "THE PARDONER'S TALE"

Modernized by Leigh Hunt

Three drunken ruffians, madly believing Death to be an embodied person, go out to kill him. They meet him in the shape of an old man, who tells them where Death is to be found; and they find him accordingly.

IN Flanders there was once a desperate set
Of three young spendthrifts, fierce with drink
and debt,
Who, haunting every sink of foul repute,
And giddy with the din of harp and lute,
Went dancing and sat gambling day and night,
And swilled and gorged beyond their natures' might,
And thus upon the devil's own altar laid
The bodies and the souls that God had made.

So horribly they swore with every word,
They seemed to think the Jews had spared our Lord,
That rent his body; and the worse they swore,
And scoffed, and sinned, they did but laugh the more.

Their doors were ever turning on the pin
To let their timbrellers and tumblers in,
Sellers of cakes and such-like—every one
A devil's own help to see his business done,
And blow up fires, far better, Sirs, made less,
Out of the accursed fuel of excess.

These wretches, having lost one night at play,
Were drinking still by the sad dawn of day,

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

When hearing a bell go for some one dead,
They cursed, and called the vintner's boy, and said,
"Who's he that has been made cold meat to-night?
Ask the fool's name, and see you bring it right."

The boy who had been sick, and in whose head
Something had put strange and grave matter, said,
"Nay, Sirs, 'twas Hob, the smith. You knew him well;
A big-mouthed, red-haired man; you called him Hell.
Last evening he was sitting, bolt upright,
Too drunk to speak, when in there came a wight
Whom men call *Death*, that slayeth high and low;
And with his staff Death felled him at a blow;
And so, without one word, betook him hence.
He hath slain heaps during the pestilence.
And, Sirs, they say, the boldest man had best
Beware how he invites so grim a guest,
Or be prepared to meet him, night and day.
'Tis what, long since, I've heard my mother say."

"Ay", quoth the vintner, "every word you hear
Is true as gospel. He hath slain this year,
And barely with his presence, half the place.
God grant we meet not with his dreadful face."

"God grant a fig's end", exclaimed one. "Who's he
Goes blasting thus fools' eyes? Let's forth, we three,
And hunt him out, and punch the musty breath
Out of his bones, and be the death of Death."

'Twixt rage and liquor staggering forth they flung,
And on their impious oaths their changes rung;
And then would pause, and gathering all the breath
Their shouts had left them, cry out, "Death to Death"!

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

They had not gone a furlong, when they met,
Beside a bridge that crossed a rivulet,
A poor old man, who meekly gave them way,
And bowed, and said, "God save ye, Sirs, I pray."

The foremost swaggerer, prouder for the bow,
Said, "Well, old crawler, what art canting now?
Why art thou thus wrapped up, all save thy face?
Why liv'st so long, in such a sorry case?"

The old man began looking steadfastly
Into the speaker's visage, eye to eye,
And said, "Because I cannot find the man,
Nor could, though I had walked since time began,
No, not the poorest man, nor the least sage,
Who would exchange his youth for mine old age;
And therefore must I keep mine old age still,
As long as it shall please the Almighty's will.
Death will not rid me of this aching breast;
And thus I walk, because I cannot rest,
And on the ground, my mother Nature's gate,
I knock with mine old staff, early and late,
And say to her: Dear mother, let me in.
Lo! how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin.
When shall I sleep for good? Oh, mother dear,
The coffin which has stood this many a year
By my bedside, full gladly would I give
For a bare shroud, so I might cease to live;
And yet she will not do me, Sirs, that grace,
For which full pale and wrinkled is my face.

"But, Sirs, in you it is no courtesy
To mock an old man, whosoe'er he be,
Much less a harmless man in deed and word.
The Scripture, as in church ye may have heard,

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Saith, 'To an old man, hoar upon his head,
Ye shall bow down'. Therefore let this be said
By poor me now—Unto an old man do
Nought which in age ye'd not have done to you.
And so God guard ye, Sirs, in weal or woe.
I must go onward, where I have to go."

"Nay", t'other cried, "Old Would-be Dead and Gone,
Thou partest not so lightly, by Saint John.
Thou spak'st but now of that false villain Death,
Who stoppeth here a world of honest breath:
Where doth he bide? Tell us, or by the Lord
And Judas, and the jump in hempen cord,
As surely as thou art his knave and spy,
We'll hang thee out, for thine old rheums to dry.
Thou art his privy nipper, thou old thief,
Blighting and blasting all in the green leaf."

"Sirs", quoth the old man, "spare, I pray, your breaths:
Death ye would find, and this your road is Death's.
Ye see yon spread of oaks, down by the brook;
There doth he lie, sunned in a flowery nook."

Death sunning in a flowery nook! How flies
Each drunkard o'er the sward, to smite him as he lies!

They reach the nook: and what behold they there!
No Death, but yet a sight to make them stare;
To make them stare, not out of mortal dread,
But only for huge bliss and stounded head;
To wit, poured forth, countless and deep and broad,
As if some cart had there discharged its load,
A bank of florins of fine gold—all bright,
Fresh from the mint, plump, ponderous. What a sight!
They laughed, they leapt, they flung to earth, and rolled
Their souls and bodies in the glorious gold:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

And then they sat and communed; and the worst
Of all the three was he that spoke the first.

"God's life"! quoth he: "here's treasure! here's a day!
Hush—look about. Now hark to what I say.
This store that luck hath sent us, boys—ho! ho!
As freely as it came, shall it not go?
By God, it shall; and precious nights we'll spend.
Who thought friend Death would make so good an end?
This is a wizard's work, to escape us, hey?
No matter. 'Tis hard gold, and well shall pay.
But how to store it, Sirs, to get it housed?
Help must be shunned. Men's marvel would be roused.
Wherefore I hold that we draw lots, and he
To whom it falls betake him suddenly
To town, and bring us victuals here, and wine,
Two keeping watch till all the three can dine;
And then at night we'll get us spades, and here,
In its own ground, the gold shall disappear."

The lots are drawn, the youngest thief sets off;
And then the first, after a little cough,
Resumed—"I say—we two are of one mind;
Thou know'st it well; and *he* but a mean hind.
'Twas always so. We were the merry men,
And he the churl and sot. Well, mark me then.
This heap of money, ravishing to see,
The fool supposes, must be shared by three.
But—hey? Just so. You think, as wise men do,
That three men's shares are better shared by two."

"Yet how"? said t'other.

"How"! said he: "'tis done
As easily as counting two to one.
He sitteth down: thou risest as in jest,

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

And while thou tumblest with him, breast to breast,
I draw my dirk, and thrust him in the side:
Thine follows mine; and then we two divide
The lovely gold. What say'st thou, dearest friend?
Lord! of our lusty life were seen no end."

The bond was made. The journeyer to the town
Meantime had in his heart rolled up and down
The beauty of the florins, hard and bright.
"Christ Lord"! thought he, "what if I had the right
To all this treasure, my own self alone!
There's not a living man beneath the throne
Of God that should be half so blest as I."
And thus he pondered, till the Enemy,
The Fiend, who found his nature nothing loth,
Whispered him, "Poison them. They're villains both.
Always they cheat thee; sometimes beat thee; oft
Carp at thy brains. Prove now whose brains are soft."

With speed a shop he seeketh, where is sold
Poison for vermin; and a tale hath told
Of rats and polecats that molest his fowl.
"Sir", quoth the shopman, "God so guard my soul,
But thou shalt have a drug so pure and strong
To slay the knaves that do thy poultry wrong,
That were the hugest creature on God's earth
To taste it, stricken would be all his mirth
From out his heart, and life from out his sense,
Ere he could drag his body a mile hence."

The cursed wretch, too happy to delay,
Grasping the box of poison, takes his way
To the next street, and buys three flasks of wine.
Two he drugs well against his friends shall dine,
And with a mark secures the harmless one,

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

To drink at night-time till his work be done;
For all that night he looks to have no sleep,
So well he means to hide his golden heap.
And thus thrice armed, and full of murderous glee,
Back to the murderous two returneth he.

What needeth more? for even as their plan
Had shaped his death, right so hath died the man;
And even as the flasks in train were set,
His heirs and scorers fall into his net.

"Ace thrown", quoth one, smiling a smile full grim;
"Now for his wine, and then we'll bury him."

And seizing the two flasks, each held his breath
With eyes to heaven, and deep he drank his death.

A St. Valentine Rondel

Slightly modernized by E. M.

NOW welcome summer with thy sonnë soft,
That hast this winter tempest over-shake,
And driven away the longë nightës black.

Saint Valentine, that art full high a-loft,
Thus singen smalë fowlës for thy sake:
"Now welcome summer with thy sonnë soft,
That hast this winter tempest over-shake."

Well have they causë for to gladden oft,
Since each of them recovered both his mate:
Full blissful may they singen when they wake:
"Now welcome summer with thy sonnë soft,
That hast this winter tempest over-shake,
And driven away the longë nightës black."

ANONYMOUS
SCOTLAND

Sir Patrick Spens

I. THE SAILING

THE king sits in Dunfermline town
Drinking the blude-red wine:
"O whare will I get a skeely¹ skipper
To sail this new ship o' mine?"

O up and spak an eldern knight,
Sat at the king's right knee:
"Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
That ever sailed the sea."

Our king has written a braid letter,
And sealed it with his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
Was walking on the strand.

"To Noroway, to Noroway,
To Noroway over the faem;
The king's daughter o' Noroway,
'Tis thou must bring her hame."

The first word that Sir Patrick read
So loud, loud laughed he;
The neist word that Sir Patrick read
The tear blinded his e'e.

¹ skilful.

ANONYMOUS

"O wha is this has done this deed
And tauld the king o' me,
To send us out, at this time o' year,
To sail upon the sea?

"Be it wind, be it weet, be it hail, be it sleet,
Our ship must sail the faem;
The king's daughter o' Noroway,
'Tis we must fetch her hame."

They hoysed their sails on Monenday morn
Wi' a' the speed they may;
They hae landed in Noroway
Upon a Wodensday.

II. THE RETURN

"Mak ready, mak ready, my merry men a'!
Our gude ship sails the morn."
"Now ever alack, my master dear,
I fear a deadly storm.

"I saw the new moon late yestreen
Wi' the auld moon in her arm;
And if we gang to sea, master,
I fear we'll come to harm."

They hadna sail'd a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When the lift¹ grew dark, and the wind blew loud,
And gurly grew the sea.

The ankers brak, and the topmast sprang,
It was sic a deadly storm;

¹ sky.

ANONYMOUS

And the waves cam owre the broken ship
Till a' her sides were torn.

"Go fetch a web o' the silken claith,
Another o' the twine,
And wap them into our ship's side,
And let nae the sea come in."

They fetched a web o' the silken claith,
Another o' the twine,
And they wrapped them round that gude ship's side,
But still the sea came in.

O laith, laith were our gude Scots lords
To wet their cork-heeled shoon;
But lang or a' the play was played
They wat their hats aboon.

And mony was the feather bed
That flattered¹ on the faem;
And mony was the gude lord's son
That never mair cam hame.

O lang, lang may the ladies sit,
Wi' their fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the strand!

And lang, lang may the maidens sit
Wi' their gowd kames² in their hair,
A-waiting for their ain dear loves!
For them they'll see nae mair.

¹ tossed afloat.

² combs.

ANONYMOUS

Half-owre, half-owre to Aberdour,
 'Tis fifty fathoms deep;
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,
 Wi' the Scots lords at his feet!

ANONYMOUS

SCOTLAND

Clerk Saunders

CLERK SAUNDERS and may Margaret
 Walked owre yon garden green;
And deep and heavy was the love
 That fell thir twa between.

"A bed, a bed," Clerk Saunders said,
 "A bed for you and me!"
"Fye na, fye na," said may Margaret,
 "Till anes we married be!"

"Then I'll take the sword frae my scabbard
 And slowly lift the pin;
And you may swear, and save your aith,
 Ye ne'er let Clerk Saunders in.

"Take you a napkin in your hand,
 And tie up baith your bonnie e'en,
And you may swear, and save your aith,
 Ye saw me na since late yestreen."

ANONYMOUS

It was about the midnight hour,
When they asleep were laid,
When in and came her seven brothers,
Wi' torches burning red—

When in and came her seven brothers,
Wi' torches burning bright:
They said, "We hae but one sister,
And behold her lying with a knight!"

Then out and spake the first o' them,
"I bear the sword shall gar him die."
And out and spake the second o' them,
"His father has nae mair but he."

And out and spake the third o' them,
"I wot that they are lovers dear."
And out and spake the fourth o' them,
"They hae been in love this mony a year."

Then out and spake the fifth o' them,
"It were great sin true love to twain."
And out and spake the sixth o' them,
"It were shame to slay a sleeping man."

Then up and gat the seventh o' them,
And never a word spake he;
But he has thrust his bright brown brand
Out through Clerk Saunders' fair bodye.

Clerk Saunders he started, and Margaret she turned
Into his arms as asleep she lay;
And sad and silent was the night
That was atween thir twae.

ANONYMOUS

And they lay still and sleepit sound
Until the day began to daw';
And kindly she to him did say,
"It is time, true love, you were awa'."

But he lay still, and sleepit sound,
Albeit the sun began to sheen;
She look'd atween her and the wa',
And dull and drowsie were his e'en.

Then in and came her father dear;
Said, "Let a' your mourning be;
I'll carry the dead corse to the clay,
And I'll come back and comfort thee."

"Comfort weel your seven sons,
For comforted I will never be:
I ween 'twas neither knave nor loon
Was in the bower last night wi' me."

The clinking bell gaed through the town,
To carry the dead corse to the clay;
And Clerk Saunders stood at may Margaret's window,
I wot, an hour before the day.

"Are ye sleeping, Marg'ret?" he says,
"Or are ye waking presentlie?
Give me my faith and troth again,
I wot, true love, I gied to thee."

"Your faith and troth ye sall never get,
Nor our true love sall never twin,
Until ye come within my bower,
And kiss me cheik and chin."

ANONYMOUS

"My mouth it is full cold, Marg'ret;
It has the smell, now, of the ground;
And if I kiss thy comely mouth,
Thy days of life will not be lang.

"O cocks are crowing a merry midnight;
I wot the wild fowls are boding day;
Give me my faith and troth again,
And let me fare me on my way."

"Thy faith and troth thou sallna get,
And our true love sall never twin,¹
Until ye tell what comes o' women,
I wot, who die in strong traivelling?"

"Their beds are made in the Heavens high,
Down at the foot of our good Lord's knee,
Weel set about wi' gillyflowers;
I wot, sweet company for to see.

"O cocks are crowing a merry midnight;
I wot the wild fowls are boding day;
The psalms of Heaven will soon be sung,
And I, ere now, will be missed away."

Then she has taken a crystal wand,
And she has stroken her troth thereon:
She has given it him out at the shot-window,
Wi' mony a sad sigh and heavy groan.

"I thank ye, Marg'ret; I thank ye, Marg'ret;
And ay I thank ye heartilie:
Gin ever the dead come for the quick,
Be sure, Marg'ret I'll come for thee."

¹ break in two.

ANONYMOUS

It's hosen and shoon, and gown alone,
She climbed the wall, and followed him,
Until she came to the green forest,
And there she lost the sight o' him.

"Is there ony room at your head, Saunders?
Is there ony room at your feet?
Or ony room at your side, Saunders,
Where fain, fain, I wad sleep?"

"There's nae room at my head, Marg'ret,
There's nae room at my feet:
My bed it is fu' lowly now,
Amang the hungry worms I sleep.

"Cauld mould is my covering now,
But and my winding-sheet:
The dew it falls nae sooner down
Than my resting-place is weet.

"But plait a wand o' bonny birk,
And lay it on my breast;
And shed a tear upon my grave,
And wish my saul gude rest."

Then up and crew the red, red cock,
And up and crew the gray:
"'Tis time, 'tis time, my dear Marg'ret,
That you were going away.

"And fair Marg'ret, and rare Marg'ret,
And Marg'ret o' veritie,
Gin ever ye love another man,
Never love him as ye did me."

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND

The Three Ravens

THERE were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as black as they might be.

The one of them said to his make,¹
"Where shall we our breakfast take?"

"Down in yonder greenë field
There lies a knight slain under his shield;

"His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So well do they their master keep;

"His hawks they flie so eagerly,
There's no fowl dare come him nigh.

"Down there comes a fallow doe
As great with young as she might goe.

"She lift up his bloody head
And kist his wounds that were so red.

"She gat him up upon her back
And carried him to earthen lake.

"She buried him before the prime,
She was dead herself ere evensong time.

"God send every gentleman
Such hounds, such hawks, and such a leman."

¹ mate.

ANONYMOUS

The Twa Corbies

(Scottish Version)

AS I was walking all alane
I heard twa corbies² making a mane:
The tane unto the tither did say,
“Whar sall we gang and dine the day?”—

“In behint yon auld fail dyke
I wot there lies a new-slain knight;
And naebody kens that he lies there
But his hawk, his hound, and his lady fair.

“His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady’s ta’en anither mate,
So we may mak our dinner sweet.

“Ye’ll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I’ll pike out his bonny blue e’en:
Wi’ ae lock o’ his gowden hair
We’ll theek our nest when it growes bare.

“Mony a one for him maks mane,
But nane sall ken whar he is gane:
O’er his white banes, when they are bare,
The wind sall blaw for evermair.”

² ravens.

ANONYMOUS

SCOTLAND

Helen of Kirconnell

I WISH I were where Helen lies—
Night and day on me she cries;
O that I were where Helen lies
On fair Kirconnell lea!

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
And curst the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd Helen dropped,
And died to succour me!

O think na ye my heart was sair,
When my Love dropped and spak nae mair!
There did she swoon wi' meikle care,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

As I went down the water side,
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide,
On fair Kirconnell lea,

I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hackèd him in pieces sma',
I hackèd him in pieces sma',
For her sake that died for me.

ANONYMOUS

O Helen fair, beyond compare!
I'll mak a garland o' thy hair,
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
 Until the day I die!

O that I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries:
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
 Says, 'Haste, and come to me!'

O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!
If I were with thee, I'd be blest,
Where thou lies low and taks thy rest,
 On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish my grave were growing green,
A winding-sheet drawn owre my e'en,
And I in Helen's arms lying,
 On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
And I am weary of the skies,
 For her sake that died for me.

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, 15TH CENTURY

Lyke-Wake Dirge

This dirge was written to be chanted at night beside the body of one dead. We do not know the author of it, nor the precise period. The poem tells of the journey of the "saule" or spirit of the body which lies in its shroud. The salt mentioned in the first stanza is that which was placed in a platter beside the body—earth being the symbol of corruption, salt of deathlessness. "Whinnies" means gorse.

Five centuries after this poem was written, Joaquin Miller condensed the idea of it into his famous epigram:

*"All you can hold in your cold dead hand
Is what you have given away."*

THIS ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and salt and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

When thou from hence away art past,
Every nighte and alle,
To Whinny-muir thou comest at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,
Every nighte and alle,
Sit thee down and put them on;
And Christe receive thy saule.

ANONYMOUS

If hosen and shoon thou never gav'st nane,
Every nighte and alle,
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Whinny-muir that thou mays't pass,
Every nighte and alle,
To Brig o' Dread thou comest at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Brig o' Dread that thou mays't pass,
Every nighte and alle,
To Purgatory fire thou comest at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gavest meat or drink,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire sall never make thee shrink;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If meat and drink thou never gav'st nane,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane,
And Christe receive thy saule.

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and salt and candle-lighte;
And Christe receive thy saule.

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, ABOUT 15TH CENTURY

Western Wind

WESTERN wind, when wilt thou blow?
The small rain down can rain.
Christ, if my Love were in my arms
And I in my bed again!

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, ABOUT 15TH CENTURY

A Carol of Mother Mary
Modernized

I SING of a maiden
That is matchless:
King of all kings
For her son she chose.
He came al so stille
Where his mother was,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the grass.
He came al so stille
To his mother's bower,

ANONYMOUS

As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the floure.
He came al so stille
Where his mother lay,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the spray.
Mother and maiden
Was never none but she:
Well may such a lady
God's mother be.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND

Phillada Flouts Me

O WHAT a plague is love!
How shall I bear it?
She will inconstant prove,
I greatly fear it.
She so torments my mind
That my strength faileth,
And wavers with the wind
As a ship saileth.
Please her the best I may,
She loves still to gainsay;
Alack and well-a-day!
Phillada flouts me.

ANONYMOUS

At the Fair yesterday
She did pass by me;
She looked another way
And would not spy me:
I wooed her for to dine,
But could not get her;
Will had her to the wine—
He might entreat her.
With Daniel she did dance,
On me she looked askance:
O thrice unhappy chance!
Phillada flouts me.

Fair maid, be not so coy,
Do not disdain me!
I am my mother's joy:
Sweet, entertain me!
She'll give me, when she dies,
All that is fitting—
Her poultry and her bees,
And her goose sitting,
A pair of matrass beds,
And a bag full of shreds;
And yet, for all this guedes,¹
Phillada flouts me!

She hath a clout of mine
Wrought with blue coventry,
Which she keeps for a sign
Of my fidelity—
But i' faith, if she flinch
She shall not wear it:
To Tib, my t'other wench,
I mean to bear it.

¹ goods, property of any kind.

ANONYMOUS

And yet it grieves my heart
So soon from her to part:
Death strike me with his dart!
Phillada flouts me.

Thou shalt eat crudded cream
All the year lasting,
And drink the crystal stream
Pleasant in tasting:
Whig and whey whilst thou lust,
And bramble-berries,
Pie-lid and pastry-crust,
Pears, plums, and cherries.
Thy raiment shall be thin,
Made of a weevil's skin;
Yet all's not worth a pin!
Phillada flouts me.

In the last month of May
I made her posies:
I heard her often say
That she loved roses.
Cowslips and gillyflowers
And the white lily
I brought to deck the bowers
For my sweet Philly.
But she did all disdain,
And threw them back again;
Therefore 'tis flat and plain
Phillada flouts me.

Fair maiden, have a care,
And in time take me:
I can have those as fair
If you forsake me;

ANONYMOUS

For Doll the dairy-maid
 Laughed at me lately,
And wanton Winifred
 Favors me greatly.
One throws milk on my clothes,
T'other plays with my nose;
What wanting signs are those?
 Phillada flouts me.

I cannot work nor sleep
 At all in season:
Love wounds my heart so deep
 Without all reason.
I 'gin to pine away
 In my Love's shadow,
Like as a fat beast may,
 Penned in a meadow.
I shall be dead, I fear,
Within this thousand year:
And all for that my dear
 Phillada flouts me.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND

Barbara Allen's Cruelty

IN Scarlet town, where I was born,
There was a fair maid dwellin',
Made every youth cry *Well-a-way!*
Her name was Barbara Allen.

All in the merry month of May,
When green buds they were swellin',
Young Jemmy Grove on his death-bed lay,
For love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his man in to her then,
To the town where she was dwellin',
"O haste and come to my master dear,
If your name be Barbara Allen."

So slowly, slowly rase she up,
And slowly she came nigh him;
And when she drew the curtain by—
"Young man, I think you're dyin'."

"O it's I am sick and very very sick,
And it's all for Barbara Allen."
"O the better for me ye'se never be,
Though, your heart's blood were a-spillin'!"

"O dinna ye mind, young man," says she,
"When the red wine ye were fillin',

ANONYMOUS

That ye made the healths go round and round,
And slighted Barbara Allen?"

He turn'd his face unto the wall,
And death was with him dealin':
"Adieu, adieu, my dear friends all,
And be kind to Barbara Allen!"

As she was walking o'er the fields,
She heard the dead-bell knellin';
And every jow the dead-bell gave
Cried "Woe to Barbara Allen."

"O mother, mother, make my bed,
O make it saft and narrow:
My love has died for me to-day,
I'll die for him to-morrow.

"Farewell", she said, "ye virgins all,
And shun the fault I fell in:
Henceforth take warning by the fall
Of cruel Barbara Allen."

WILLIAM DUNBAR

SCOTLAND, ABOUT 1460-1520

IN the long interregnum of dulness in English poetry which followed the passing of Chaucer, the Scottish poets were the truest followers of "the father of English poetry". Lack of self-criticism, resulting in aridity, marred the verse of the English poets, who seemed not to comprehend the genius of their avowed master Chaucer. Of the "moral Gower" whom Chaucer commended, Lowell said with pardonable hyperbole that he had "positively raised tediousness to the precision of science." Of John Lydgate, Thomas Occleve and Stephen Hawes, all of whom lived mainly in the fifteenth century, the gems of poetry in their ash-heaps of prosing are so rare as to make one wonder if they may be the mere accidents of long-windedness. Chaucer's sympathetic and quizzical grasp of human character was lost to these men, as was the secret of his music and his colorful words.

In Scotland, however, at least three poets of distinction bridged the gap of the fifteenth century: the royal James I, author of the *King's Quhair* (Book); Robert Henryson, who added a conclusion of great tragic force to Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*; William Dunbar, in some things the greatest poet of his land.

Burns is Dunbar's superior in pure singing, but the earlier poet had the greater sweep of imagination and the greater variety of mood and expression. Dunbar became courtier and diplomat after being an itinerant "begging friar". He saw much of the world in its many masks and ranks; but he strives too often for "aureateness", fine language used merely for its decorative quality. Again, in his work, the old medieval liking for allegory still muffles his mouth. His burlesques, on the other hand, have been compared with those of Aristophanes. George

WILLIAM DUNBAR

Gilfillan refers to Dunbar as "the Dante of Scotland", and he questions whether any English poet has surpassed *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* in its peculiarly Dantesque qualities of severe and purged grandeur, of deep sincerity, and in that air of moral disappointment and sorrow approaching despair, which distinguished the sad-hearted lover of Beatrice. Perhaps we can sum up Dunbar's poetry by calling it a medley in which are gathered tenderness and vindictiveness, blistering satire and exuberant fancy.

The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins

It is not likely that you have ever seen before this subtle old masterpiece in a readable English version. In a few cases, I have taken slight liberties with the text, believing that I have not only clarified but also strengthened the lines.

Modernized by E. M.

OF February the fifteenth night,
Full long before the day's light
I lay in till a trance,
And then I saw both Heaven and Hell:
Methought, among the fiendis fell
Mahoun¹ called for a dance
Of outcasts that were never shriven,
Against the feast of Fasterns even²
To make their observance:
He had gallants prepare a guise³
And cast up gambols in the skies,
As varlets do in France.

* * * * *

¹ Mahommed: he was looked on as Satan in that early age.

² The evening of Shrove Tuesday, the day before the beginning of the fast of Lent.

³ mask or disguising.

WILLIAM DUNBAR

Disdainful harlots in haughty wise
Came in in many and sundry guise;
But yet laughed never Mahoun
Till priests came in with shaven necks:
Then all the fiends laughed, making mocks—
Black-belly and Bawsy-broun.

* * * * *

“Let’s see”, quoth he; “now who begins?”
With that the foul Seven Deadly Sins
Began to leap at once.
And first of all in dance was Pride,
With hair combed back and bonnet on side,
Like to make ruined homes.
And round about him, like a wheel,
His cassock rumpled to the heel,
Down to the very stones.
Many deceivers with him tripped
Through scalding fire: aye as they skipped
They grinned with hideous groans.

Then Ire came in with trouble and strife:
His hand was always on his knife:
He swaggered like a bear.
Boasters, braggarts, and wranglers
After him passed along in pairs,
Harnessed, in fear of war,
In jackets and scrips and bonnets of steel:
Their legs were chained to the heel:
Perverse was their appear!¹
Some lit on others with swords that spilt,
Some gullied others to the hilt
With knives that shave and shear.

¹ demeanor.

WILLIAM DUNBAR

Next Envy followed in the dance,
With feud and fire in every glance,
Hid malice and despite;
For hidden hate that traitor trembled.
Followed him scolders that dissembled
With feignèd wordis white;
And flatterers in to men's faces,
And backbiters in secret places,
Who joyed in lying wit,
And whisperers of false reports.
Alas, that kings and royal courts
Of them can not be quit!

Next him in dance came Cuvatise,
Root of all evil and ground of vice,
Who never can be content.
Caitiffs, wretches, and usurers,
Misers, hoarders, and gatherers,
All with that warlock went.
Out of their throats each shot on other
Hot molten gold, methought a fudder,¹
And wildfire most fervént:
They spewed out all their shot, and then
Fiends filled them up to the throat agen
With gold of every print.

Afterward Sloth, at the second bidding,
Came like a sow out of a midding,
And sleepy was his grunting.
Many a tun-bellied sloven, lousy—
Slothful sluts and wenches drowsy—
Were for his pleasure hunting.
He drew them forth into a chain;

¹ a load, 128 pounds weight.

WILLIAM DUNBAR

And Belial, with a bridle rein,
Walloped them on their rumps.
In dance they were so slow of feet,
They gave them in the fire a heat
And made them stir their stumps.

Then Lechery, that loathly corse,
Came snorting like a breeding horse,
And Idleness him led.
There was with him an ugly crew
And many a stinking body too,
Which had in sin been dead.
When they were entered in the dance
They were full strange of countenance,
Like torches burning red.

* * * * *

Then the foul monster Gluttony
Of maw insatiable and greedy,
Did into the revel press.
Him followed many a foul drunkárt,
With can and drinking-cup and quart
In surfeit and excess.
Full many a waistless wally-drag,¹
With fat unwieldable, forth did wag
In grease that did increase.
“Drink!” aye they cried with many a gape:
The fiends gave them hot lead to lap:
Their bounty was no less.

* * * * *

¹ outcast.

WILLIAM DUNBAR

No minstrels played to them, no doubt,
For gleemen they were holden out
By day and eke by night;
Except a minstrel that slew a man—
So to his heritage he won,
And entered by brief of right.

Then cried Mahoun for a Highland pageant:
Then ran a fiend to fetch Makfadyane,
Far northward in a nook;
But he the war-cry had done shout
And gathered the Ersemen¹ so about
That in Hell great room they took.
These termagants with tag and tatter
Full loud in Erse² began to clatter,
And croak like raven and rook:
So deaf the Devil was with their yell
That in the deepest pot of Hell
He smothered them with smoke.

¹ Celts of Scotland and Ireland.

² The language of the Gàels or Celts in the Highlands of Scotland.

STEPHEN HAWES

ENGLAND, 1476-1523

His Epitaph

O MORTAL folk, you may behold and see
How I lie here, sometime a mighty knight:
The end of joy and all prosperitee
Is death at last, thorough his course and might:
After the day there cometh the dark night,
For though the daye be never so long,
At last the belle ringeth to evensong.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY

ENGLAND, 1516-1547

FOUR centuries of English poetry are indebted to Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyatt for many qualities. They replanted the seed which Chaucer had sown, and which in that earlier day had been allowed to perish. Through them Italy and the Renaissance flowered in England. They reestablished the lyric, wrote the first sonnets in English, transformed the rudeness of fifteenth century verse toward metrical constancy. Surrey regularized the five-stressed iambic measure, "blank verse", which was destined to rise into "Marlowe's mighty line", into Shakespeare's marches of music, into Milton's high-erected verse. Wyatt, though an imitative poet, was perhaps the true trail-blazer of this pair; Surrey smoothed

HENRY HOWARD

the roads his predecessor had hewn out of the forest. Of Wyatt's tempestuous energy a couplet hints:

"Such hammers work within my head
That sound naught else into my ears."

These lines suggest the "pleasing grief" and musical voice of Surrey:

" . . . And I may plaine [complain] my fill
Unto myself, unlesse this careful song
Print in your hart some parcel of my tene [sorrow]
For I, alas, in silence all too long,
Of mine old hurt yet fele the wound but grene."

Description of Spring

Wherein each thing renews, save only the Lover

THE soote season, that bud and bloom forth
brings,
With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale:
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.

Summer is come, for every spray now springs:
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;
The fishes flete with new repaired scale.

The adder all her slough away she slings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she mings;
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.

And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs.

HENRY HOWARD

The Means to Attain Happy Life

MARTIAL, the things that do attain
The happy life be these, I find:
The riches left, not got with pain;
The fruitful ground, the quiet mind;

The equal friend; no grudge, no strife;
No charge of rule, nor governance;
Without disease, the healthful life;
The household of continuance;

The mean diet, no delicate fare;
True wisdom joined with simpleness;
The night dischargèd of all care,
Where wine the wit may not oppress.

The faithful wife, without debate;
Such sleeps as may beguile the night:
Contented with thine own estate
Ne wish for death, ne fear his might.

THOMAS SACKVILLE, EARL OF DORSET

ENGLAND, 1536-1608

THIS poet, who was Lord Treasurer and Lord High Steward of England in the closing years of the sixteenth century, is recorded by George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, to have "kept house for forty and two years in an honorable proportion. For thirty years those of his family consisted of some two hundred persons,

THOMAS SACKVILLE

that number appearing daily on his checkroll. A very rare example in this present age of ours [written in 1608] when housekeeping is so decayed." Another chronicler, Sir Samuel Brydges, finds it "grievous to think that this splendid genius, who lived in a great age, and was created Earl of Dorset by King James I, afterwards sunk the poet in the coarser character of statesman."

George Saintsbury says that Sackville's contributions to *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559-63) "contain the best poetry written in the English language between Chaucer and Spenser." Some of Sackville's poems were models for Edmund Spenser in his higher and broader achievement. His finer poetic work forms the bridge between *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Fairy Queen*.

In the Induction to *The Mirror*, Sackville rises into his highest powers, where we see him seemingly in struggle with the tempest and the night.

Old Age

The Induction begins with a picture of winter, drawn with vivid colors and a powerful pencil; then follow some brief reflections, suggested by the faded fields and scattered summer flowers, on the instability of all mundane things; but suddenly the poet perceives that the night is drawing on faster, and thereupon he redoubles his pace. At last Sorrow conducts the poet to the region of departed spirits; and then follows a succession of allegoric figures drawn with remarkable strength of imagination, and with an equally remarkable command of expressive, picturesque and melodious language.

AND next in order sad Old Age we found,
His beard all hoar, his eyes hollow and blind,
With drooping cheer still poring on the ground,
As on the place where nature him assigned

THOMAS SACKVILLE

To rest, when that the Sisters had untwined
His vital thread, and ended with their knife
The fleeting course of fast-declining life.

There heard we him, with broke and hollow plaint,
Rue with himself his end approaching fast,
And all for naught his wretched mind torment
With sweet remembrance of his pleasures past,
And fresh delights of lusty youth forwast;¹
Recounting which how would he sob and shriek,
And to be young again of Jove beseek!

* * * *

Crook-backed he was, tooth-shaken and blear-eyed,
Went on three feet, and sometime crept on four;
With old lame bones that rattled by his side;
His scalp all piled,² and he with eld forelore;
His withered fist still knocking at Death's door;
Fumbling and drivelling as he draws his breath;
For brief, the shape and messenger of Death.

¹ Utterly wasted and gone.

² bald.

SIR EDWARD DYER

ENGLAND, 1545?-1607

My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is

MY mind to me a kingdom is!
Such present joys therein I find
That it excels all other bliss
That earth affords, or grows by kind.
Though much I want which most would have,
Yet still my mind forbids to crave.

No princely pomp, no wealthy store,
No force to win a victory,
No wily wit to salve a sore,
No shape to feed a loving eye—
To none of these I yield as thrall.
For why? My mind doth serve for all.

See how plenty surfeits oft,
And hasty climbers soon do fall.
I see that those which are aloft
Mishap doth threaten most of all.
They get with toil, they keep with fear;
Such cares my mind could never bear.

Content to live, this is my stay;
I seek no more than may suffice;
I press to bear no haughty sway.
Look, what I lack my mind supplies:
Lo, thus I triumph like a king,
Content with that my mind doth bring.

SIR EDWARD DYER

Some have too much, yet still do crave!
I little have, and seek no more.
They are but poor, though much they have;
And I am rich, with little store.
They poor, I rich; they beg, I give;
They lack, I leave; they pine, I live.

I laugh not at another's loss;
I grudge not at another's pain;
No worldly waves my mind can toss;
My state at one doth still remain.
I fear no foe, I fawn no friend;
I loathe not life, nor dread my end.

Some weigh their pleasure by their lust,
Their wisdom by their rage of will,
Their treasure is their only trust,
A cloakèd craft their store of skill;
But all the pleasure that I find
Is to maintain a quiet mind.

My wealth is health and perfect ease,
My conscience clear, my choice defence.
I neither seek by bribes to please,
Nor by deceit to breed offence.
Thus do I live, thus will I die:
Would all did so, as well as I!

NICHOLAS BRETON

ENGLAND, 1545—1626?

BRETON was graduated from Oxford and wrote forty odd pastorals and satires in verse and prose, distinguished by grace and charm. His pastoral lyrics are marked by a naturalness, an easy flow and gaiety, a tenderness and purity that ought to restore him to fame.

Phillida and Corydon

IN the merry month of May,
In a morn by break of day,
Forth I walked by the wood-side
Whereas May was in her pride:
There I spièd all alone
Phillida and Corydon.
Much ado there was, God wot!
He would love and she would not.
She said, never man was true;
He said, none was false to you,
He said, he had loved her long;
She said, Love should have no wrong.
Corydon would kiss her then;
She said, maids must kiss no men
Till they did for good and all;
Then she made the shepherd call
All the heavens to witness truth
Never loved a truer youth.
Thus with many a pretty oath,
Yea and nay, and faith and troth

NICHOLAS BRETON

Such as seely shepherds use
When they will not Love abuse.
Love, which had been long deluded,
Was with kisses sweet concluded;
And Phillida, with garlands gay,
Was made the Lady of the May.

EDMUND SPENSER

ENGLAND, 1552—1599

SPENSER was born of parents poor but of ancient fame. His life was a long desperate struggle with poverty and hope deferred.

Living in the first part of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Spenser was subject to a greater variety of intellectual forces than perhaps any other English poet. In his work we find the spirit of his age—find many conflicts—a slant toward Catholic tradition, a zeal for Protestant reform, a love for the old ideals of feudalism and chivalry, a humanist eagerness for letters, a romantic pursuit of beauty, a devotion to chastity of soul. All these found a place in the admirable inconsistency of his mind.

His genius is not, primarily, inventive or creative, but sensitive and receptive. He was richly prepared for his huge incompleted task—the penning of one of the three or four greatest poems of England. Spenser had a sympathetic nature, a wide-reaching intelligence, profound learning (“our sage and serious Spenser”, Milton called him) a leaping imagination, a soothing melody and harmony of speech. He has “many a winding bout of linked sweetness long drawn out.”

EDMUND SPENSER

Now, *The Faerie Queene* embodies Spenser's genius and gathers the many interests of his mind under the superficial unity of an allegory. In his use of this old form Spenser's aims were vague and conflicting, yet this fact is of no account when we are reading him for his poetry. "His allegory", said Leigh Hunt, ". . . is but one part allegory, and nine parts beauty and enjoyment." The vastitude of Spenser's project (a veiled exposition of all ethical philosophy, with a second mirror of allegory glancing at the great ones of Spenser's age) proves the poet to be one of the great "enterprisers." The "moral and political virtues" were to be shown in twenty-four books, or parts, of which only a trifle more than a quarter was completed. In the books finished (or at least extant) the personal qualities of Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice and Courtesy are celebrated. In each case the virtue is represented by a knight-errant who maintains the excellence of his cause in manifold combats and other romantic adventures.

The Faerie Queene stands on a level with *The Canterbury Tales*; yet it is more extraordinary in its invention, and far more comforting to the spirit. It is surpassed by Milton only in the austerity and sublimity of his greatness—surpassed by Shakespeare only in the vastness of his insight into character.

Spenser's "minor" poems would alone make the reputation of a poet of the first order. His early *Shepherds Calender*, in emulation of classical and other pastorals, is a queer mingling of folk tradition and rustic northern speech with literary tradition and the language of polite society; already the love of antique lore was showing itself. In some of his *Amoretti*, or love sonnets, also in his *Hymnes*, with their "union of intellectual and sensual rapture", and particularly in his *Prothalamion* and *Epithalamion*, marriage songs, he rises to sublimity.

Spenser's deliberately archaic diction, which has been inveighed against, is only the exterior dress of his writing; if it does not please, it may be ignored. Spenser has been

EDMUND SPENSER

censured for tediousness, but critics who find him dull have a dull spot in their minds. There will always remain his blazonry of picturing, his supernal music, his lucent imagination, his chasteness of ideas.

Almost all poets since his time have been debtors to Spenser and have done him reverence. Poets as unlike as Milton and Pope, as ill-mated as Dryden and Coleridge, have praised him. His "Spenserian stanza" was copied by Burns, Byron, Shelley and Keats. Wordsworth described him:

"Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace."

Leaving out the coarser elements of the Elizabethan Renaissance, you will find nearly all of its glory and glamor in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. There is no stain of carnality upon his moon-lighted, melodious pages. He kindles man to a noble discontent with prosaic views of life. He lifts man into a divine atmosphere in which he himself becomes divine.

The Faerie Queene is all a dream of idealism, a story of the struggle of the soul toward the supernal beauty, toward's Love's eternity. Spenser is kindred to Plato, and sees behind all mortal things the immortal Idea which renders them luminous. The seen is only the shadow: the unseen is the everlasting reality.

The poem is a mingling of the nobilities of Christian chivalry with the vision of Pagan perfection. It is all a lofty endeavor to idealize the real. Never before—never since—has man ever listened to such a poetical portrayal of his imperishable dreams.

EDMUND SPENSER

The Bower of Bliss

Modernized

FROM "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

THERE the most dainty paradise on ground
Itself doth offer to his sober eye,
In which all pleasures plenteously abound,
And none does others happiness envy;
The painted flowers; the trees upshooting high;
The dales for shade; the hills for breathing space;
The trembling groves; the crystal running by;
And, that which all fair works doth most aggrace,¹
The art, which all that wrought, appeared in no place.

One would have thought (so cunningly the rude
And scornèd parts were mingled with the fine)
That Nature had for wantonness ensude²
Art, and that Art at Nature did repine;
So striving each the other to undermine,
Each did the others work more beautify;
So differing both in wills agreed in fine:
So all agreed, through sweet diversity,
This garden to adorn with all variety.

And in the midst of all a fountain stood,
Of richest substance that on earth might be,
So pure and shiny that the silver flood
Through every channel running one might see;
Most goodly it with curious imagery
Was over-wrought, and shapes of naked boys,
Of which some seemed with lively jollity
To fly about, playing their wanton toys,
Whilst others did themselves embay³ in liquid joys.

¹ give grace to.

² imitated.

³ bathe.

EDMUND SPENSER

And over all, of purest gold, was spread
A trail of ivy in his native hue;
For the rich metal was so colorèd,
That wight, who did not well avised¹ it view,
Would surely deem it to be ivy true;
Low his lascivious arms adown did creep,
That, themselves dipping in the silver dew,
Their fleecy flowers they fearefully did steep,
Which drops of crystal seemed for wantoness to weep.

Infinite streams continually did well
Out of this fountain, sweet and fair to see,
The which into an ample laver fell,
And shortly grew to so great quantity,
That like a little lake it seemed to be,
Whose depth exceeded not three cubits height,
That through the waves one might the bottom see,
All paved, beneath with jasper shining bright,
That seemed the fountain in that sea did sail upright.

* * * * *

Eftsoons² they heard a most melodious sound,
Of all that might delight a dainty ear,
Such as at once might not on living ground,
Save in this paradise, be heard elsewhere.
Right hard it was for wight which did it hear,
To read what manner music that might be;
For all that pleasing is to living ear
Was there consorted in one harmony;
Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree:

¹ with attention.

² immediately.

EDMUND SPENSER

The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempered sweet;
The angelical soft trembling voices made
To the instruments divine response meet;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmur of the waters fall;
The waters fall, with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all.

Una and the Lion

Modernized

FROM "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

ONE day, nigh weary of the irkesome way,
From her unhasty beast she did alight;
And on the grass her dainty limbs did lay
In secret shadow, far from all men's sight;
From her fair head her fillet she undight,
And laid her stole aside. Her angel's face,
As the great eye of heaven, shined bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;
Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace.

It fortunèd, out of the thickest wood
A ramping lion rushèd suddenly,
Hunting full greedy after salvage blood:¹
Soone as the royal virgin he did spy,

¹ blood of wild animals.

EDMUND SPENSER

With gaping mouth at her ran greedily,
To have at once devoured her tender corse;
But to the prey whenas he drew more nigh
His bloody rage asuaged with remorse,¹
And, with the sight amazed, forgot his furious force.

Instead thereof, he kissed her weary feet,
And licked her lily hands with fawning tongue;
As he her wrongèd innocence did weet.²
O how can beauty master the most strong,
And simple truth subdue avenging wrong!
Whose yielded pride and proud submission,
Still dreading death, when she had markèd long,
Her heart gan melt in great compassiön;
And drizzling tears did shed for pure affectiön.

"The lion, lord of every beast in field,"
Quoth she, "his princely puissance doth abate,
And mighty proud to humble weak³ does yield,
Forgetful of the hungry rage, which late
Him pricked in pity of my sad estate:
But he, my lion, and my noble lord,
How does he find in cruel heart to hate
Her, that him loved, and ever most adored
As the god of my life? why hath he me abhorred?"

Redounding tears did choke the end of her plaint,
Which softly echoed from the neighbor wood;
And, sad to see her sorrowful constraint,
The kingly beast upon her gazing stood;
With pity calmed, down fell his angry mood.
At last, in close heart shutting up her pain,
Arose the virgin born of heavenly brood,

¹ pity.

² understand

³ weakness.

EDMUND SPENSER

And to her snowy palfrey got again,
To seek her strayèd champion if she might attain.

The lion would not leave her desolate,
But with her went along, as a strong guard
Of her chaste person, and a faithful mate
Of her sad troubles and misfortunes hard:
Still, when she slept, he kept both watch and ward;
And, when she waked, he waited diligent,
With humble service to her will prepared;
From her fair eyes he took commandement,
And ever by her looks conceivèd her intent.

Venus in Search of Cupid, Coming to Diana

Modernized

FROM "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

SHORTLY unto the wasteful woods she came,
Whereas she found the goddess with her crew,
After late chase of their embrewèd game,
Sitting beside a fountain in a rew;
Some of them washing with the liquid dew
From off their dainty limbs the dusty sweat
And soil, which did defile their lively hue;
Others lay shaded from the scorching heat;
The rest upon her person gave attendance great.

She having hung upon a bough on high
Her bow and painted quiver, had unlaced
Her silver buskins from her nimble thigh,
And her lank loins ungirt and breasts unbraced,
After her heat the breathing cold to taste;

EDMUND SPENSER

Her golden locks, that late in tresses bright
Embraided were for hindering of her haste,
Now loose about her shoulders lay undight,
And were with sweet ambrosia all besprinkled light.

Soon as she Venus saw behind her back,
She was ashamed to be so loose surprised,
And waked half wrath against her damsels slack,
That had not her thereof before advised,
But suffered her so carelessly disguised
Be overtaken: soon her garments loose
Upgathering in her bosom she comprised,
Well as she might, and to the goddess rose,
While all her nymphs did like a garland her inclose.

The Cave of Mammon

Modernized

FROM "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

"Spenser's strength", says Hazlitt, "is not strength of will or action, of bone and muscle, nor is it coarse and palpable; but it assumes a character of vastness and sublimity seen through the same visionary medium and blended with the appalling associations of preternatural agency. We need only to turn in proof of this to The Cave of Mammon, or the account of the change of Malbecco into Jealousy. Sir Guyon, crossing a desert, finds Mammon sitting midst his gold in a gloomy valley. Mammon, taking him down into his cave, tempts him with the treasures there, and also with those in the Garden of Proserpine.

THAT house's form within was rude and strong,
Like a huge cave hewn out of rocky clift,
From whose rough vault the ragged branches hung

EDMUND SPENSER

Embossed with massy gold of glorious gift,
And with rich metal loaded every rift,
That heavy ruin they did seem to threat;
And over them Arachne high did lift
Her cunning web, and spread her subtle net,
Enwrappèd in foul smoke, and clouds more black than
jet.

Both roof and floor, and walls were all of gold,
But overgrown with dust and old decay,
And hid in darkness, that none could behold
The hue thereof; for view of chearful day
Did never in that house itself display,
But a faint shadow of uncertain light;
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away;
Or as the moon, clothèd with cloudy night,
Does show to him that walks in fear and sad affright.

In all that room was nothing to be seen,
But huge great iron chests and coffers strong,
All barred with double bands, that none could ween
Them to enforce by violence or wrong;
On every side they placèd were along:
But all the ground with skulls was scatterèd,
And dead men's bones, which round about were flung,
Whose lives (it seemèd) whilom there were shed,
And their vile carcasses now left unburièd.

They forward pass, nor Guyon yet spake word,
Till that they came unto an iron door,
Which to them opened of its own accord,
And showed of riches such exceeding store,
As eye of man did never see before,
Nor ever could within one place be found,
Though all the wealth which is, or was of yore,

EDMUND SPENSER

Could gathered be through all the world around,
And that above were added to that under ground.

The charge thereof unto a covetous sprite
Commanded was, who thereby did attend,
And warily awaited, day and night,
From other covetous fiends it to defend,
Who it to rob and ransack did intend.
Then Mammon turning to that warrior, said:
"Lo here the worldè's bliss! lo here the end,
To which all men do aim, rich to be made!
Such grace now to be happy is before thee laid."

"Certes" (said he) "I n'll thine offered grace,
Nor to be made so happy do intend;
Another bliss before mine eyes I place,
Another happiness, another end:
To them that list, these base regards I lend;
But I in arms, and in achievements brave,
Do rather choose my fitting hours to spend,
And to be lord of those that riches have,
Than them to have myself, and be their servile slave."

* * * * *

Mammon leads Sir Guyon onward through the cave, showing him more treasures, and afterwards takes him into the palace of Ambition; but all in vain.

Mammon emmovèd was with inward wrath;
Yet forcing it to fain, him forth thence led,
Through griesly shadows, by a beaten path,
Into a garden goodly garnishèd
With herbs and fruits, whose kinds must not be read:
Not such as earth, out of her fruitful womb,

EDMUND SPENSER

Throws forth to men, sweet and well-savorèd,
But direful deadly black, both leaf and bloom,
Fit to adorn the dead and deck the dreary tomb.

There mournful cypress grew in greatest store;
And trees of bitter gall; and heben sad;
Dead sleeping poppy; and black hellebore;
Cold colocintida; and tetra mad;
Mortal samnitis; and cicuta bad,
With which the unjust Athenians made to die
Wise Socrates, who therefore quaffing glad
Poured out his life and last philosophy
To the fair Critias, his dearest belamy!

The garden of Prosérpina this hight;
And in the midst thereof a silver seat,
With a thick arbor goodly over-dight,
In which she often used from open heat
Herself to shroud, and pleasures to entreat:
Next thereunto did grow a goodly tree,
With branches broad dispread and body great,
Clothèd with leaves, that none the wood might see,
And loaded all with fruit as thick as it might be.

Their fruit were golden apples, glistening bright,
That goodly was their glory to behold;
On earth like never grew, nor living wight
Like ever saw, but they from hence were sold;
For those, which Hercules with conquest bold
Got from great Atlas' daughters, hence began,
And planted there did bring forth fruit of gold;
And those, with which th' Eubean young man wan
Swift Atalanta, when through craft he her out-ran.

EDMUND SPENSER

Here also sprung that goodly golden fruit,
With which Acontius got his lover true,
Whom he had long time sought with fruitless suit;
Here eke that famous golden apple grew,
The which amongst the gods false Até threw;
For which the Idæan ladies disagreed,
Till partial Paris deemed it Venus' due,
And had of her fair Helen for his meed,
That many noble Greeks and Trojans made to bleed.

The warlike elf much wondered at this tree
So fair and great, that shadowed all the ground;
And his broad branches, laden with rich fee,
Did stretch themselves without the utmost bound
Of this great garden, compassed with a mound,
Which overhanging, they themselves did steep
In a black flood, which flowed about it round.
That is the river of Cocytus deep,
In which full many souls do endless wail and weep.

The Nymphs and Graces Dancing to a Shepherd's Pipe

Modernized

FROM "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

INTO this place whereas the elfin knight
Approached, him seemèd that the merry sound
Of a shrill pipe he playing heard on height,
And many feet fast thumping the hollow ground;
That through the woods their echo did rebound;
He nigher drew, to weet what might it be;
There he a troop of ladies dancing found

EDMUND SPENSER

Full merrily, and making gladful glee,
And in the midst a shepherd piping he did see.

He durst not enter into the open green,
For dread of them unwares to be descried,
For breaking off their dance, if he were seen;
But in the covert of the wood did bide,
Beheld of all, yet of them unespied:
There he did see (that pleasèd much his sight
That even he himself his eyes envied)
A hundred naked maidens lily white,
All rangèd in a ring, and dancing in delight.

All they without were rangèd in a ring
And dancèd round, but in the midst of them
Three other ladies did both dance and sing,
The whilst the rest them round about did hem,
And like a garland did in compass stem;
And in the midst of those same three were placed
Another damsel, as a precious gem
Amidst a ring most richly well enhansed,
That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced.

Those were the Graces, daughters of delight,
Handmaids of Venus, which are wont to haunt
Upon this hill, and dance there day and night;
Those three to man all gifts of grace do graunt,
And all that Venus in herself doth vaunt
Is borrowèd of them; but that fair one
That in the midst was placèd paravaunt.
Was she to whom that shepherd piped alone,
That made him pipe so merrily as never none.

She was, to weet, that jolly shepherd's lass
Which pipèd there unto that merry rout;

EDMUND SPENSER

That jolly shepherd which there pipèd, was
Poor Colin Clout (who knows not Colin Clout?)
He piped apace, whilst they him danced about.
Pipe, jolly shepherd! pipe thou now apace
Unto thy Love, that made thee low to lout;
Thy Love is present there with thee in place,
Thy Love is there advaunst to be another Grace.

And there she remains, dancing in the midst of the Graces for ever, herself a Grace, made one by the ordinance of the poor but great poet who here addresses himself under his pastoral title, and justly prides himself on the power of conferring immortality on his Love.

Archimago's Hermitage

Modernized

FROM "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

Archimago, a hypocritical magician, lures Una and the Red-cross Knight into his abode; and while they are asleep, sends to Morpheus, the god of sleep, for a false dream to produce discord between them. Note the exquisite modulation of the first stanza.

A LITTLE lowly hermitage it was
Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side,
Far from resort of people, that did pass
In travel to and fro: a little wide
There was a holy chapel edified,
Wherein the hermit duly wont to say
His holy things each morn and eventide;
Thereby a crystal stream did gently play
Which from a sacred fountain wellèd forth alway.

EDMUND SPENSER

Arrivèd there the little house they fill,
Nor look for entertainment where none was;
Rest is their feast, and all things at their will:
The noblest mind the best contentment has.
With fair discourse the evening so they pass,
For that old man of pleasing words had store,
And well could file his tongue as smooth as glass:
He told of saints and popes, and evermore
He strewed an Ave Mary after and before.

The drooping night thus creepeth on them fast;
And the sad humor, loading their eye-lids,
As messenger of Morpheus, on them cast
Sweet slumbering dew; the which to sleep them bids.
Unto their lodgings then his guests he rids;
Where, when all drowned in deadly sleep he finds,
He to his study goes, and there amids'
His magic books and arts of sundry kinds,
He seeks out mighty charms to trouble sleepy minds.

Then choosing out few words most horrible
(Let none them read!) thereof did verses frame,
With which, and other spells like terrible,
He bad awake black Pluto's grisly dame,
And cursèd Heaven; and spake reproachful shame
Of highest God, the Lord of life and light:
A bold bad man, that dared to call by name
Great Gorgon, prince of darkness and dead night;
At which Cocytus quakes, and Styx is put to flight.

And forth he called out of deep darkness dread
Legions of sprites, the which, like little flies,
Fluttering about his ever damnèd head,
Await where to their service he applies,
To aid his friends, or fray his enemies;

EDMUND SPENSER

Of those he chose out two, the falsest two
And fittest for to forge true-seeming lies;
The one of them he gave a message to,
The other by himself staid other work to do.

He making speedy way through spersèd air,
And through the world of waters wide and deep,
To Morpheus' house doth hastily repair.
Amid the bowels of the earth full steep,
And low, where dawning day doth never peep,
His dwelling is; there Tethys his wet bed
Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steep
In silver dew his ever-drooping head,
While sad night over him her mantle black doth spread.

Whose double gates he findeth lockèd fast;
The one fair framed of burnished ivory,
The other all with silver overcast;
And wakeful dogs before them far do lie,
Watching to banish Care their enemy,
Who oft is wont to trouble gentle Sleep.
By them the sprite doth pass in quietly
And unto Morpheus comes, whom drownèd deep
In drowsy fit he finds; of nothing he takes keep.

And more to lull him in his slumber soft,
A trickling stream, from high rock tumbling down,
And ever drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mixed with a murmuring wind, much like the sound
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swoond:
No other noise, nor people's troublous cries,
As still are wont t' annoy the wallèd town,
Might there be heard; but careless Quiet lies,
Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies.

EDMUND SPENSER

The messenger approaching to him spake;
But his waste words returned to him in vain:
So sound he slept, that nought might him awake.
Then rudely he him thrust, and pushed with pain,
Whereat he 'gan to stretch: but he again
Shook him so hard, that forcèd him to speak
As one then in a dream, whose drier brain
Is tossed with troubled sights and fancies weak;
He mumbled soft, but would not all his silence break.

The sprite then 'gan more boldly him to wake,
And threatened unto him the dreaded name
Of Hecaté: whereat he 'gan to quake,
And lifting up his lumpish head, with blame
Half angry askèd him, for what he came.
"Hither," quoth he, "me Archimago sent;
He that the stubborn sprites can wisely tame;
He bids thee to him send for his intent
A fit false dream, that can delude the sleepers' sent."

The god obeyed; and calling forth straightway
A diverse dream out of his prison dark,
Delivered it to him, and down did lay
His heavy head, devoid of careful cark;
Whose senses all were straight benumbed and stark.
He, back returning by the ivory door,
Remounted up as light as cheerful lark;
And on his little wings the dream he bore
In haste unto his lord, where he him left afore.

Epithalamion

Two hundred years after Spenser, there appeared the celebrated Swendenborg, the greatest seer of the modern world. Of his volume, "Marriage Love", Ralph Waldo Emerson says: "It comes near to being The Hymn of Love, which Plato attempted in 'The Banquet'—the love which Dante says Casella sang among the angels in Paradise."

The poet Spenser would have rejoiced in this epochal volume; for—as Alfred Welsh says—"The loftiest, deepest, most angelic element in this genius is reverence for woman—which is only a worship of the supernal charm and attraction rendered visible in her. All the wealth of his respect and tenderness is poured out at the feet of his heroines. In his adoration, he lifts them up to heights where no mortal fleck is visible. In this exalted mood he sings of his bride, in the 'Epithalamion', his marriage song."

This is lofty emotion, lofty ideality; and how distant it is from all our cold modern realism, which reduces sex to a mere physiological function, and strips from romantic love all the music and mystery that invested it in the old chivalric ages.

YE learned sisters, which have oftentimes
 Been to me aiding, others to adorn,
 Whom ye thought worthy of your graceful rhymes,
 That even the greatest did not greatly scorn
 To hear their names sung in your simple lays,
 But joyed in their praise;
 And when ye list your own mishaps to mourn,
 Which death, or love, or fortunes wreck did raise,
 Your string could soon to sadder tenor turn,
 And teach the woods and waters to lament
 Your doleful dreriment:

EDMUND SPENSER

Now lay those sorrowful complaints aside;
And, having all your heads with garlands crowned,
Help me mine own love's praises to resound;
Nor let the same of any be envide:
So Orpheus did for his own bride!
So I unto my self alone will sing;
The woods shall to me answer, and my Echo ring.

Early, before the world's light-giving lamp
His golden beam upon the hills doth spread,
Having dispersed the night's uncheareful damp,
Do ye awake; and, with fresh lustihead,
Go to the bower of my belovèd love,
My truest turtle dove;
Bid her awake; for Hymen is awake,
And long since ready forth his mask to move,
With his bright Tead that flames with many a flake,
And many a bachelor to wait on him,
In their fresh garments trim.
Bid her awake therefore, and soon her dight,
For lo! the wishèd day is come at last,
That shall, for all the pains and sorrows past,
Pay to her usury of long delight:
And, whilst she doth her dight,
Do ye to her of joy and solace sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your Echo ring.

Bring with you all the Nymphs that you can hear,
Both of the rivers and the forests green,
And of the sea that neighbors to her near:
All with gay garlands goodly well beseen.
And let them also with them bring in hand
Another gay garland,
For my fair Love, of lilies and of roses,

EDMUND SPENSER

Bound truelove wise, with a blue silk riband,
And let them make great store of bridal posies,
And let them eke bring store of other flowers,
To deck the bridal bowers.
And let the ground whereas her foot shall tread,
For fear the stones her tender foot should wrong,
Be strewed with fragrant flowers all along,
And diapered like the discolored mead;
Which done, do at her chamber door await,
For she will waken straight;
The while do ye this song unto her sing,
The woods shall to you answer, and your Echo ring.

* * * * *

Wake now, my Love, awake! for it is time;
The Rosy Morn long since left Tithone's bed,
All ready to her silver couch to climb;
And Phœbus gins to show his glorious head.
Hark! how the cheerful birds do chaunt their lays
And carol of Love's praise.
The merry lark his matins sings aloft;
The thrush replies; the mavis descant plays;
The ousel shrills; the ruddock warbles soft;
So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,
To this day's merriment.
Ah! my dear Love, why do ye sleep thus long,
When meeter were that ye should now awake,
To await the coming of your joyous make,
And hearken to the bird's love-learnèd song,
The dewy leaves among!
For they of joy and pleasance to you sing,
That all the woods them answer, and their Echo ring.

My Love is now awake out of her dreams,
And her fair eyes, like stars that dimmèd were

EDMUND SPENSER

With darksome cloud, now show their goodly beams
More bright than Hesperus his head doth rear.
Come now, ye damsels, daughters of delight,
Help quickly her to dight:
But first come ye fair hours, which were begot,
In Jove's sweet Paradise of Day and Night;
Which do the seasons of the year allot,
And all, that ever in this world is fair,
Do make and still repair:
And ye three handmaids of the Cyprian Queen,
The which do still adorn her beauty's pride,
Help to adorn my beautiful bride:
And, as ye her array, still throw between
Some graces to be seen;
And, as ye use to Venus, to her sing,
The whiles the woods shall answer, and your Echo ring.

Now is my Love all ready forth to come:
Let all the virgins therefore well await:
And ye fresh boys, that tend upon her groom,
Prepare yourselves; for he is coming straight.
Set all your things in seemly good array,
Fit for so joyful day:
The joyfult day that ever sun did see,
Fair Sun! show forth thy favorable ray,
And let thy life-full heat not fervent be,
For fear of burning her sunshiny face,
Her beauty to disgrace.
O fairest Phœbus! father of the Muse!
If ever I did honor thee aright,
Or sing the thing that might thy mind delight,
Do not thy servant's simple boon refuse;
But let this day, let this one day, be mine;
Let all the rest be thine.

EDMUND SPENSER

Then I thy sovran praises loud will sing,
That all the woods shall answer, and their Echo ring.

* * * * *

Lo! where she comes along with portly pace,
Like Phœbe, from her chamber of the East,
Arising forth to run her mighty race,
Clad all in white, that seems a virgin best.
So well it her beseems, that ye would ween
Some angel she had been.
Her long loose yellow locks like golden wire,
Sprinkled with pearl, and pearling flowers atween,
Do like a golden mantle her attire;
And, being crownèd with a garland green,
Seem like some maiden Queen.
Her modest eyes, abashèd to behold
So many gazers as on her do stare,
Upon the lowly ground affixèd are;
Nor dare lift up her countenance too bold,
But blush to hear her praises sung so loud,
So far from being proud.
Nathless do ye still loud her praises sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your Echo ring.

* * * * *

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lively spright,
Garnished with heavenly gifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,
And stand astonished like to those which read
Medusa's mazeful head.
There dwells sweet Love, and constant Chastity,
Unspotted Faith, and comely Womanhood,
Regard of Honor, and mild Modesty;
There Virtue reigns as Queen in royal throne,
And giveth laws alone,

EDMUND SPENSER

The which the base affections do obey,
And yield their services unto her will;
Nor thought of thing uncomely ever may
Thereto approach to tempt her mind to ill.
Had ye once seen these her celestial treasures,
And unrevealèd pleasures,
Then would ye wonder, and her praises sing,
That all the woods should answer, and your Echo ring.

Open the temple gates unto my Love,
Open them wide that she may enter in,
And all the posts adorn as doth behoove,
And all the pillars deck with garlands trim,
For to receive this Saint with honor due,
That cometh in to you.
With trembling steps, and humble reverence,
She cometh in, before the Almighty's view;
Of her ye virgins learn obedience,
When so ye come into those holy places,
To humble your proud faces:
Bring her up to the high altar, that she may
The sacred ceremonies there partake,
The which do endless matrimony make;
And let the roaring organs loudly play
The praises of the Lord in lively notes;
The whiles, with hollow throats,
The choiristers the joyous anthems sing,
That all the woods may answer, and their Echo ring.

Behold, while she before the altar stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,
And blesseth her with his two happy hands,
How the red roses flush up in her cheeks,
And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain

EDMUND SPENSER

Like crimson dyed in grain:
That even the angels, which continually
About the sacred altar do remain,
Forget their service and about her fly,
Oft peeping in her face, that seems more fair,
The more they on it stare.
But her sad eyes, still fastened on the ground,
Are governèd with goodly modesty,
That suffers not one look to glance awry,
Which may let in a little thought unsound.
Why blush ye, Love, to give to me your hand,
The pledge of all our band!
Sing, ye sweet angels, Alleluya sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your Echo ring.

Now all is done: bring home the bride again;
Bring home the triumph of our victory:
Bring home with you the glory of her gain
With joyance bring her and with jollity.
Never had man more joyful day then this,
Whom Heaven would heap with bliss,
Make feast therefore now all this live-long day;
This day for ever to me holy is.
Pour out the wine without restraint or stay,
Pour not by cups, but by the belly full,
Pour out to all that wull,
And sprinkle all the posts and walls with wine,
That they may sweat, and drunken be withal.
Crown ye god Bacchus with a coronal,
And Hymen also crown with wreaths of vine;
And let the Graces dance unto the rest,
For they can do it best:
The while the maidens do their carol sing,
To which the woods shall answer, and their Echo ring.

EDMUND SPENSER

Ring ye the bells, ye young men of the town,
And leave your wonted labors for this day:
This day is holy; do ye write it down,
That ye for ever it remember may.
This day the sun is in his chiefest height,
With Barnaby the bright,
From whence declining daily by degrees,
He somewhat loseth of his heat and light,
When once the Crab behind his back he sees.
But for this time it ill ordainèd was,
To choose the longest day in all the year,
And shortest night, when longest fitter were:
Yet never day so long, but late would pass.
Ring ye the bells, to make it wear away,
And bonfires make all day;
And dance about them, and about them sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your Echo ring.

Ah! when will this long weary day have end,
And lend me leave to come unto my love?
How slowly do the hours their numbers spend?
How slowly does sad Time his feathers move?
Haste thee, O fairest Planet, to thy home,
Within the Western foam:
Thy tired steeds long since have need of rest.
Long though it be, at last I see it gloom,
And the bright evening-star with golden crest
Appear out of the East.
Fair child of beauty! glorious lamp of love!
That all the host of heaven in ranks dost lead,
And guidest lovers through the night's sad dread,
How cheerfully thou lookest from above,
And seemst to laugh atween thy twinkling light,
As joying in the sight

EDMUND SPENSER

Of these glad many, which for joy do sing,
That all the woods them answer, and their Echo ring!

* * * * *

And ye high heavens, the temple of the gods,
In which a thousand torches flaming bright
Do burn, that to us wretched earthly clods
In dreadful darkness lend desired light;
And all ye powers which in the same remain,
More then we men can feign,
Pour out your blessing on us plenteously,
And happy influence upon us rain,
That we may raise a large posterity,
Which from the earth, which they may long possess
With lasting happiness,
Up to your haughty palaces may mount;
And, for the guerdon of their glorious merit,
May heavenly tabernacles there inherit,
Of blessed Saints for to increase the count.
So let us rest, sweet Love, in hope of this,
And cease till then our timely joys to sing:
The woods no more us answer, nor our Echo ring!

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

ENGLAND, 1552—1618

RALEIGH is perhaps the most surprising of the men of action to become poets. Graduated from Oxford, he went as a volunteer to France in 1569 and served for several years in the continental wars. Received with favor at the English Court, he was knighted, and distinguished himself as an explorer and planter of colonies in America. John Nichol observes, in his *Life of Francis Bacon*, that while Bacon was "the grandest figure of the age, Raleigh was the most fascinating." Of the versatility and fervid daring of the Elizabethans, he remains the chief representative. Soldier, courtier, philosopher and poet, "he carried the spirit of Sidney into the field, and discussed meters and myths with Spenser when it was won." Chief among his few poems is *The Lie*, which was long believed to have been written the night before his execution as a political conspirator. It is now known, however, to have been in manuscript in 1596. Thomas Arnold does not believe that any one else then living—Shakespeare excepted—was capable of having written this poem.

A splendid impatience shows in some of Raleigh's verses: in others the shadow of death, in which he dwelt during his imprisonment, stretches across the page. He is often elevated in tone—seldom low. His poetry is simple, energetic, melodious. Spenser called him "the summer's nightingale."

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

The Silent Lover

I

PASSIONS are likened best to floods and streams:
The shallow murmur, but the deeps are dumb;
So, when affection yields discourse, it seems
The bottom is but shallow whence they come.
They that are rich in words, in words discover
That they are poor in that which makes a lover.

II

Wrong not, sweet empress of my heart,
The merit of true passion,
With thinking that he feels no smart,
That sues for no compassion.

Silence in love bewrays more woe
Than words, though ne'er so witty:
A beggar that is dumb, you know,
May challenge double pity.

Then wrong not, dearest to my heart,
My true, though secret passion:
He smarteth most that hides his smart,
And sues for no compassion.

The Conclusion

EVEN such is Time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with earth and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days;
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.

*A Vision Upon This Conceit of the Faerie
Queene*

METHOUGHT I saw the grave where Laura
lay,
Within that temple, where the vestal flame
Was wont to burn; and passing by that way,
To see that buried dust of living fame,
Whose tomb fair Love and fairer Virtue kept,
All suddenly I saw the Faerie Queene,
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept,
And, from thenceforth, those Graces were not seen;

For they this Queen attended; in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse:
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce,
Where Homer's sprite did tremble all for grief,
And cursed the access of that celestial thief!

The Lie

This remarkable poem was ascribed to Joshua Sylvester by William Cullen Bryant. But on looking into the folio volume of Sylvester's poems, I find that he uses the beautiful lines merely as a text, to which he hangs some of his own trivial verses. Emerson attributes the poem to Raleigh, and I follow his distinguished leading.

GO, soul, the body's guest,
 Upon a thankless errand!
 Fear not to touch the best,
 The truth shall be thy warrant;
 Go, since I needs must die,
 And give the world the lie.

Go tell the court it glows
 And shines like rotten wood;
 Go tell the church it shows
 What's good, and doth no good.
 If church and court reply,
 Then give them both the lie.

Tell potentates they live
 Acting by others' actions,
 Not loved unless they give,
 Not strong but by their factions.
 If potentates reply,
 Give potentates the lie.

Tell men of high condition
 That rule affairs of State,
 Their purpose is ambition,
 Their practice only hate.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

And if they once reply,
Then give them all the lie.

Tell them that brave it most,
They beg for more by spending,
Who in their greatest cost,
Seek nothing but commending.
And if they make reply,
Then give them all the lie.

Tell zeal it lacks devotion,
Tell love it is but lust,
Tell time it is but motion,
Tell flesh it is but dust;
And wish them not reply,
For thou must give the lie.

Tell age it daily wasteth,
Tell honor how it alters,
Tell beauty how she blasteth,
Tell favor how she falters.
And as they shall reply,
Give every one the lie.

Tell wit how much it wrangles
In tickle points of niceness;
Tell wisdom she entangles
Herself in over-wiseness.
And when they do reply,
Straight give them both the lie.

Tell physic of her boldness,
Tell skill it is pretension,
Tell charity of coldness,

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

Tell law it is contention.
And as they do reply,
So give them still the lie.

Tell fortune of her blindness,
Tell nature of decay,
Tell friendship of unkindness,
Tell justice of delay.
And if they will reply,
Then give them all the lie.

Tell arts they have no soundness,
But vary by esteeming;
Tell schools they want profoundness,
And stand too much on seeming.
If arts and schools reply,
Give arts and schools the lie.

Tell faith it's fled the city,
Tell how the country erreth,
Tell, manhood shakes off pity,
Tell, virtue least preferreth.
And if they do reply,
Spare not to give the lie.

So when thou hast, as I
Commanded thee, done blabbing—
Although to give the lie
Deserves no less than stabbing—
Yet stab at thee who will,
No stab the soul can kill.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

The Pilgrimage

This strange poem seems to have been written soon after Sir Walter Raleigh had received the news that he was to be beheaded.

GIVE me my scallop-shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation,
My gown of glory, hope's true gauge;
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.

Blood must be my body's balmer;
No other balm will there be given;
Whilst my soul, like quiet palmer,
Travelleth towards the land of Heaven;
Over the silver mountains,
Where spring the nectar fountains:
There will I kiss
The bowl of bliss;
And drink mine everlasting fill
Upon every milken hill.
My soul will be a-dry before;
But after, it will thirst no more.

Then by that happy blissful day,
More peaceful pilgrims I shall see,
That have cast off their rags of clay,
And walk apparelled fresh like me.
I'll take them first
To quench their thirst
And taste of nectar's suckets,
At those clear wells

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

Where sweetness dwells,
Drawn up by saints in crystal buckets.

And when our bottles and all we
Are filled with immortality,
Then the blessed paths we'll travel,
Strewed with rubies thick as gravel;
Ceilings of diamonds, sapphire floors,
High walls of coral and pearly bowers.
From thence to Heaven's bribeless hall,
Where no corrupted voices brawl;
No conscience molten into gold,
No forged accuser bought or sold,
No cause deferred, no vain-spent journey;
For there Christ is the King's Attorney,
Who pleads for all without degrees,
And He hath angels, but no fees.
And when the grand twelve-million jury
Of our sins, with direful fury,
'Gainst our souls black verdicts give,
Christ pleads His death, and then we live.
Be Thou my speaker, taintless pleader,
Unblotted lawyer, true proceeder!
Thou giv'st salvation even for alms;
Not with a bribèd lawyer's palms.
And this is mine eternal plea
To Him that made heaven, earth and sea,
That, since my flesh must die so soon,
And want a head to dine next noon,
Just at the stroke, when my veins start
and spread,
Set on my soul an everlasting head!
Then am I ready, like a palmer fit,
To tread those blest paths which before
I writ.

Of death and judgment, Heaven and Hell,
Who oft doth think, must needs die well.

JOHN LYLY

ENGLAND, 1553-1606

EUPHUES, a novel, published by Lyly in 1579, became at once what would now be called "a best seller". The English Court had all the ornate phrases by heart. The language of the work is extremely affected, consisting chiefly of antithesis in thought and expression. Shakespeare caricatures it in *Love's Labor Lost*, wherein Armado is "a man of fire-new words, fashion's own knight, that hath a mint of phrases in his brain—one whom the music of his own vain tongue doth ravish like enchanting harmony." But the extravagance of the novel sprang from the general burst of delight in England's new resources of thought and language—the popular new sense of pleasure in delicacy or grandeur of phrase, in the structure and arrangement of sentences, in what has been termed the atmosphere of words out of which style was itself to spring.

The muse of John Lyly was tuneful, never over-ardent. His fastidiousness in prose did not prevent him from writing lyrics of a dainty, charming—one might say—artful naturalness. Surely that was no exaggerated publisher's blurb which described him as "the witty, comical, facetiously quick and unparalleled John Lyly."

Cards and Kisses

CUPID and my Campaspe played
 At cards for kisses—Cupid paid:
 He stakes his quiver, bow and arrows,
 His mother's doves and team of sparrows;
 Loses them too; then down he throws
 The coral of his lip, the rose
 Growing on 's cheek (but none knows how)
 With these, the crystal of his brow,
 And then the dimple of his chin:
 All these did my Campaspe win.
 At last he set her both his eyes—
 She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
 O Love! has she done this for thee?
 What shall, alas! become of me?

Spring's Welcome

WHAT bird so sings, yet so does wail?
 O 't is the ravished nightingale.
Jug, jug, jug, jug, tereu! she cries,
 And still her woes at midnight rise.
 Brave prick-song! Who is 't now we hear?
 None but the lark so shrill and clear;
 Now at heaven's gate she claps her wings,
 The morn not waking till she sings.
 Hark, hark, with what a pretty throat
 Poor robin redbreast tunes his note!
 Hark how the jolly cuckoos sing
Cuckoo! to welcome in the spring!
Cuckoo! to welcome in the spring!

JOHN LYLY

Pan's Song

PAN'S Syrinx was a girl indeed,
Though now she's turned into a reed.
From that dear reed Pan's pipe does come,
A pipe that strikes Apollo dumb;
Nor flute, nor lute, nor gittern can
So chant it, as the pipe of Pan.
Cross-gartered swains, and dairy girls
With faces smug and round as pearls,
When Pan's shrill pipe begins to play,
With dancing wear out night and day:
The bag-pipe's drone his hum lays by,
When Pan sounds up his minstrelsy.
His minstrelsy! O base! This quill
Which at my mouth with wind I fill,
Puts me in mind, though her I miss,
That still my Syrinx' lips I kiss.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

ENGLAND, 1554-1586

OF the close contemporaries of Spenser, we shall remember Sidney longest, both for his noble life and death, and for the high legacy he left to literature. His writings invade all the fields of literature covered by his age, save drama. His fancy is often artificial and his rhetoric is frequently walking on stilts. His *Arcadia*, styled by him "a trifle, and that triflingly handled", is a pastoral in prose, a romance of chivalric love. Lofty was his conception of chivalry—"high-erected thoughts in a heart of courtesy."

His *Defence of Poesy* is perhaps the first critical document in English that shows broad and exalted sympathy with the poetic spirit. It is famous for its praise of the early ballad, *Chevy Chase*. His *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets, although many of them are little more than exercises, were the first to hint what lyric fervor might pulse in the sonnet form. On their publication, Thomas Nashe gave this warning to the other sonneteers:

"Put our your rushlights, you poets and rhymers! and bequeath your crazed quatorzains to the chandlers! for lo, here he cometh that hath broken your legs!"

Shelley in his *Adonais* calls Sidney "a spirit without a spot." The English nation put on mourning at his death. They lamented not only the departed soldier and gentleman, but also lamented the loss of "something rare and beautiful that could never be recaptured", something that could never be properly transmitted to future ages.

Sonnets from "Astrophel and Stella"

LOOK IN THY HEART

LOVING in truth, and fain in verse my love to
 show,
 That She, dear She! might take some pleasure of
 my pain;
 Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make
 her know,
 Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain:
 I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
 Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain;
 Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
 Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt
 brain.

But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's
 stay.
 Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's
 blows;
 And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.
 Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my
 throes,
 Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:
 "Fool!" said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart,
 and write!"

COME SLEEP!

Come Sleep! O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,
 The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,
 The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
 The indifferent judge between the high and low!
 With shield of proof, shield me from out the press

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw:
O make in me those civil wars to cease!
I will good tribute pay if thou do so.

Take thou of me, smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland, and a weary head:
And if these things, as being thine in right
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

LEAVE ME, O LOVE

Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust;
And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be;
Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light
That doth both shine, and give us sight to see.

O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide
In this small course which birth draws out to death,
And think how ill becometh him to slide,
Who seeketh Heaven, and comes of heavenly breath.
Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see:
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me!

Wooring Stuff

FAIN'T Amorist! what, dost thou think
 To taste Love's honey, and not drink
 One dram of gall? or to devour
 A world of sweet, and taste no sour?
 Dost thou ever think to enter
 The Elysian fields, that dar'st not venture
 In Charon's barge? A lover's mind
 Must use to sail with every wind.
 He that loves, and fears to try,
 Learns his mistress to deny.

Doth she chide thee? 'Tis to show it,
 That thy coldness makes her do it.

Is she silent? Is she mute?
 Silence fully grants thy suit.

Doth she pout and leave the room?
 Then she goes, to bid thee come.

Is she sick? Why then, be sure
 She invites thee to the cure.

Doth she cross thy suit with 'No'?
 Tush! She loves to hear thee woo.

Doth she call the faith of man
 In question? Nay, she loves thee then.
 And if ever she makes a blot,
 She's lost if that thou hitt'st her not.

He that after ten denials
 Dares attempt no further trials,
 Hath no warrant to acquire
 The dainties of his chaste desire.

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, 1557

A Praise of His Lady

GIVE place, you ladies, and begone!
Boast not yourselves at all!
For here at hand approacheth one
Whose face will stain you all.

The virtue of her lively looks
Excels the precious stone:
I wish to have none other books
To read or look upon.

In each of her two crystal eyes
Smileth a naked boy:
It would you all in heart suffice
To see that lamp of joy.

I think Nature hath lost the mould
Where she her shape did take;
Or else I doubt if Nature could
So fair a creature make.

She may be well compared
Unto the Phoenix kind,
Whose like was never seen or heard,
That any man can find.

In life she is Diana chaste,
In troth Penelopey;
In word and eke in deed steadfast.
What will you more we say?

ANONYMOUS

If all the world were sought so far,
Who could find such a wight?
Her beauty twinkleth like a star
Within the frosty night.

Her rosial color comes and goes
With such a comely grace,
More ruddier, too, than doth the rose,
Within her lively face.

At Bacchus' feast none shall her meet,
Ne at no wanton play,
Nor gazing in an open street,
Nor gadding as a stray.

The modest mirth that she doth use
Is mixed with shamefastness;
All vice she doth wholly refuse,
And hateth idleness.

O Lord! it is a world to see
How virtue can repair,
And deck in her such honesty,
Whom Nature made so fair.

Truly she doth so far exceed
Our women nowadays,
As doth the jeliflower a weed;
And more a thousand ways.

How might I do to get a graff
Of this unspotted tree?
For all the rest are plain but chaff,
Which seem good corn to be.

ANONYMOUS

This gift alone I shall her give—
When death doth what he can,
Her honest fame shall ever live
Within the mouth of man.

THOMAS LODGE
ENGLAND, 1558?-1625

To Love

LOVE guards the roses of thy lips,
And flies about them like a bee;
If I approach he forward skips,
And if I kiss he stingeth me.

Love in thine eyes doth build his bower,
And sleeps within their pretty shine,
And if I look the boy will lower,
And from their orbs shoot shafts divine. . . .

GEORGE CHAPMAN

ENGLAND, 1559—1634

IF Chapman is not immortalized by his own poetry, he is by the great Keats sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*. Charles Lamb thought that "Chapman would have made a great epic poet, if indeed he has not abundantly shown himself to be one; for his Homer is not so properly a translation as [it is] the stories of Achilles and Ulysses re-written. The earnestness and passion which he has put into every part of these poems would be incredible to a reader of mere modern translation."

Chapman made no secret of the effort that it cost him to climb Parnassus, or of his fiery resolution to reach the top. He refrained from publication till he was thirty-five years old, and then burst upon the world like a repressed and accumulated volcano. Saintsbury sums him up as "a remarkable dramatist, a poet of merit, and an altogether admirable translator." He was a wise, manly, but irregular genius. Among his achievements is the completion of the remarkable narrative, *Hero and Leander*, left half finished by Christopher Marlowe.

Too much pedantic love of learning, too much pride that would not let him please "the commune reader", too much verbiage, too many conceits of expression, encrusted the genius of him who was undeniably a spirit of fervent aspiration. Chapman's best verses are gnomic and didactic.

GEORGE CHAPMAN

Bridal Song

O COME, soft rest of cares! come, Night!
Come, naked Virtue's only tire,
The reaped harvest of the light
Bound up in sheaves of sacred fire.
Love calls to war:
Sighs his alarms,
Lips his swords are,
The field his arms.

Come, Night, and lay thy velvet hand
On glorious Day's outfacing face;
And all thy crownèd flames command
For torches to our nuptial grace.
Love calls to war:
Sighs his alarms,
Lips his swords are,
The field his arms.

SIR JOHN HARRINGTON
ENGLAND, 1561-1612

Of Treason

TREASON doth never prosper: what's the reason?
For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

SAMUEL DANIEL

ENGLAND, 1562-1619

THE publication of Daniel's sonnets in 1592 was an epoch in the history of the English sonnet. This was the first sequential body of poetry written in the English form invented by Surrey—three independent quatrains plus a couplet. Daniel set an example to Shakespeare in treating the sonnet as a stanza, connecting several of them as parts of a larger expression. The one beginning "Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night", is ranked among the best sonnets in the language. But their chief interest is found in their relation to Shakespeare's sonnets, several of which seem to have been built up from ideas suggested by those that Daniel addressed to one Delia.

Besides his sonnets, Daniel wrote much in prose and verse. He was unfortunate in choosing historical subjects for his more pretentious work, for he lacked narrative power. His genius is tender, meditative, dignified, peaceful.

Beauty, Time, and Love

SONNETS

FAIR is my Love and cruel as she's fair;
Her brow-shades frown, although her eyes are
sunny;
Her smiles are lightning, though her pride despair;
And her disdains are gall, her favors honey:
A modest maid, decked with a blush of honor,
Whose feet do tread green paths of youth and love—
The wonder of all eyes that look upon her,
Sacred on earth, designed a Saint above.

SAMUEL DANIEL

Chastity and Beauty, which were deadly foes,
Live reconcilèd friends within her brow;
And had she Pity to conjoin with those,
Then who had heard the plaints I utter now?
For had she not been fair, and thus unkind,
My Muse had slept, and none had known my mind.

Let others sing of Knights and Paladines
In agèd accents and untimely words,
Paint shadows in imaginary lines,
Which well the reach of their high wit records:
But I must sing of thee, and those fair eyes
Authentic shall my verse in time to come;
When yet the unborn shall say, *Lo, where she lies!*
Whose beauty made him speak, that else was dumb!

These are the arcs, the trophies I erect,
That fortify thy name against old age;
And these thy sacred virtues must protect
Against the Dark, and Time's consuming rage.
Though the error of my youth in them appear,
Suffice, they show I lived, and loved thee dear.

Care-charmer Sleep

CARE-CHARMER SLEEP, son of the sable Night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born:
Relieve my languish; and restore the light;
With dark forgetting of my care, return!
And let the day be time enough to mourn
The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth:
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn,
Without the torment of the night's untruth.

Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires,
To model forth the passions of the morrow;
Never let rising sun approve you liars,
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain;
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

MICHAEL DRAYTON

ENGLAND, 1563-1631

GOLDEN-MOUTHED" DRAYTON was perhaps the most voluminous of the Elizabethan poets whose chief work is not dramatic. Besides bulk, it had variety, for he wrote pastoral eclogues, "legends", a sonnet sequence, "heroicall epistles", odes, and elegies—besides the works by which he will always be remembered, even if not read, namely the patriotic chronicle poem of the *Barrons Wars*, and the stupendous *Poly-Olbion or a Chorographickall Description of Tracts, Rivers, Mountains, Forests and other Parts of this renowned Isle of Great Britaine. With intermixture of the most Remarquable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarities, Pleasures, and Commodities of the same: Digested in a Poem by Michael Drayton, Esq.*

The very conception of such a multitudinous work is peculiarly Elizabethan, and not only industry but also a good deal of poetry went into the making of it. It ambles steadily, never excites, frequently wearies; but, on the whole, it is of surprisingly high merit, diversified with floral description, glimpses of rural sports, brave storytelling, and fanciful personification of rivers and mountains. It is the greatest topographical poem.

Specially memorable among Drayton's shorter pieces are the manly sonnet, "Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part", and also that war-song of Agincourt: "Fair stood the wind for France".

The verdict of Hazlitt upon Drayton is just and adequate: "His mind is a rich marly soil that produces an abundant harvest and repays the husbandman's toil; but few flaunting flowers, the garden's pride, grow in it, nor any poisonous weeds."

MICHAEL DRAYTON

The Parting

SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part—
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free.
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes—
Now if thus wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

Immortality in Song

HOW many paltry, foolish, painted things,
That now in coaches trouble every street,
Shall be forgotten, whom no poet sings,
Ere they be well wrapped in their winding-sheet?
Where I to thee eternity shall give,
When nothing else remaineth of these days,
And queens hereafter shall be glad to live
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise;
Virgins and matrons reading these my rhymes,
Shall be so much delighted with thy story,
That they shall grieve they lived not in these times,
To have seen thee, their sex's only glory:
So shalt thou fly above the vulgar throng,
Still to survive in my immortal song.

The Ballad of Agincourt

FAIR stood the wind for France,
When we our sails advance,
Nor now to prove our chance
Longer will tarry;
But putting to the main,
At Caux, the mouth of Seine,
With all his martial train
Landed King Harry.

And taking many a fort,
Furnished in warlike sort,
Marcheth towards Agincourt
In happy hour;
Skirmishing day by day
With those that stopped his way,
Where the French general lay,
With all his power.

Which in his height of pride,
King Henry to deride,
His ransom to provide,
To the King sending:
Which he neglects the while,
As from a nation vile,
Yet with an angry smile,
Their fall portending.

And turning to his men,
Quoth our brave Henry then,
"Though they to one be ten,
Be not amazed:
Yet have we well begun;

MICHAEL DRAYTON

Battles so bravely won,
Have ever to the sun,
By Fame been raisèd.

"And for myself (quoth he)
This my full rest shall be,
England ne'er mourn for me,
Nor more esteem me:
Victor I will remain,
Or on this earth lie slain,
Never shall she sustain
Loss to redeem me.

"Poictiers and Cressy tell,
When most their pride did swell,
Under our swords they fell:
No less our skill is
Than when our Grandsire great,
Claiming the regal seat,
By many a warlike feat
Lopped the French lilies."

The Duke of York so dread
The eager vanward led;
With the main Henry sped,
Amongst his henchmen:
Exeter had the rear,
A braver man not there.
O Lord, how hot they were
On the false Frenchmen!

They now to fight are gone,
Armor on armor shone,
Drum now to drum did groan,
To hear was wonder;

MICHAEL DRAYTON

That with the cries they make,
The very earth did shake,
Trumpet to trumpet spake,
Thunder to thunder.

* * * * *

Upon Saint Crispin's Day
Fought was this noble fray,
Which fame did not delay
To England to carry:
Oh, when shall Englishmen
With such acts fill a pen,
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry?

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

ENGLAND, 1564-1593

IN the long reign of poetry has there ever been so immortally memorable a year as 1564, wherein both Marlowe and Shakespeare rose into Time—the shoemaker's son and the butcher's son!

Of this son of a shoemaker, one of the true aristocracy of genius, we know only a few noteworthy facts. One of the "wits" of Cambridge University, in London for the half-dozen years of his short career, author of some half-dozen plays during that time, certainly a reveler, accused of atheism, stabbed (as we now know) in a disgraceful tavern brawl over the payment of "the sum of pence", dead at twenty-nine! Had Shakespeare died in 1593, it is

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probable that Marlowe would now be looked on as the supreme poet of the Elizabethan age. Marlowe's literary failings, imperfections, omissions, are easily and often repeated; but "it is only Shakespeare who can do everything, and Shakespeare did not die at twenty-nine."

Marlowe was the true creator of the drama, the mightiest of Shakespeare's pioneers; and he was second only to the great one in imagination, originality, richness of phrase, poetic and dramatic power.

In Marlowe we are conscious on almost every page of the insatiable thirst for the infinite, the reaching to the stars, coupled with the command of magnificent, imaginative verse. His treatment of the "mighty" iambic blank-verse line is famous. Marlowe's genius stands secure in its own triumphant grandeur; although it is usually said that he developed his form of verse only to serve Shakespeare—only, as it were, to give Shakespeare an instrument fit to picture, immortally, the long sad, glad, mad procession of humanity.

The narrative poem, *Hero and Leander*, is full of glowing description and it rises to a high seriousness; we could better spare Shakespeare's longer narrative poems than this of Marlowe's.

The plays of Marlowe have a family likeness, each being concerned with a central character of more or less volcanic and superhuman aspiration. His heaven-scaling and hell-plunging heroes—Tamburlaine, Barabas, Dr. Faustus—are the projections of the poet's own titanic spirit. Perhaps (with his epic tendency toward sustained splendor and the pageant of color and form in the imagination, rather than toward the complexities of episode and the conflicts and minutiae of character) Marlowe, had he lived, might more fittingly have been the Milton of his age than the rival of Shakespeare.

The critics have had their fling at Marlowe, but the poets know his greatness. In the words of William Watson, "Violent, sinister, rebellious, unblest, Marlowe has something of the grandeur of a fallen angel about him; and, in the dayspring of our drama, he is Lucifer, son

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

of the morning." Drayton's verse-tribute is in its own expression worthy of its subject:

"Next Marlowe, bathèd in the Thespian springs,
Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had: his raptures were
All air and fire—"

If in that age of brave aspiration and accomplishment, Shakespeare owed aught to Marlowe, let it be remembered that the creator of *Hamlet* was not indebted merely for a species of poetic expression, but also for the ladder to the stars, for a clue to the crossroads of the universe!

Who Ever Loved, That Loved Not at First Sight?

FROM "HERO AND LEANDER"

IT lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is overruled by fate.
When two are stripped, long ere the course begin,
We wish that one should lose, the other win;
And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
The reason no man knows; let it suffice
What we behold is censured by our eyes.
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

*From the First Sestiad of "Hero and
Leander"*

ON Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood,
In view and opposite two cities stood,
Sea-borderers, disjoined by Neptune's might;
The one Abydos, the other Sestos hight.
At Sestos Hero dwelt, Hero the fair,
Whom young Apollo courted for her hair,
And offered as a dower his burning throne,
Where she should sit, for men to gaze upon.
The outside of her garments were of lawn,
The lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn;
Her wide sleeves green, and bordered with a grove,
Where Venus in her naked glory strove
To please the careless and disdainful eyes
Of proud Adonis, that before her lies;
Her kirtle blue, whereon was many a stain,
Made with the blood of wretched lovers slain.
Upon her head she ware a myrtle wreath,
From whence her veil reached to the ground beneath:
Her veil was artificial flowers and leaves,
Whose workmanship both man and beast deceives:
Many would praise the sweet smell as she past,
When 'twas the odor which her breath forth cast;
And there for honey, bees have sought in vain,
And, beat from thence, have lighted there again.
About her neck hung chains of pebble-stone,
Which, lightened by her neck, like diamonds shone.
She ware no gloves; for neither sun nor wind
Would burn or parch her hands, but, to her mind,
Or warm or cool them, for they took delight
To play upon those hands, they were so white.
Buskins of shells, all silvered, used she,

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

And branched with blushing coral to the knee;
Where sparrows perched, of hollow pearl and gold,
Such as the world would wonder to behold:
Those with sweet water oft her handmaid fills,
Which as she went, would cherup through their bills.
Some say, for her the fairest Cupid pined,
And, looking in her face, was strooken blind.
But this is true; so like was one the other,
As he imagined Hero was his mother;
And oftentimes into her bosom flew,
About her naked neck his bare arms threw,
And laid his childish head upon her breast,
And, with still panting rocked, there took his rest.

Helen

FROM "THE LIFE AND DEATH OF DR. FAUSTUS"

Dr. Faustus as the supreme desire of his selfish luxurious life calls up Helen out of the vasty deep. On seeing her beauty, he breaks forth in this remarkable apostrophe:

WAS this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burned the topless towers of Ilium?—
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!—
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flees!—
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sacked,
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colors on my plumèd crest;
Yes, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars!

An Idea of Wealth

FROM "THE JEW OF MALTA"

O THAT of thus much that return was made,
And of the third part of the Persian ships,
There was the venture summed and satisfied.
As for those Samnites and the men of Uz,
That bought my Spanish oils and wines of Greece,
Here have I pursed their paltry silverlings.
Fie; what a trouble 't is to count this trash!
Well fare the Arabians, who so richly pay
The things they traffic for with wedge of gold,
Whereof a man may easily in a day
Tell that which may maintain him all his life.
The needy groom, that never fingered groat,
Would make a miracle of thus much coin;
But he whose steel-barred coffers are crammed full,
And all his life-time hath been tirèd
Wearying his fingers' ends with telling it,
Would in his age be loth to labor so,
And for a pound to sweat himself to death.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Give me the merchants of the Indian mines,
That trade in metal of the purest mold;
The wealthy Moor, that in the eastern rocks
Without control can pick his riches up,
And in his house heap pearl like pebble-stones;
Receive them free, and sell them by the weight;
Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,
Jacinth, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,
Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,
And seld-seen costly stones of so great price,
As one of them indifferently rated,
And of a carat of this quantity,
May serve, in peril of calamity,
To ransom great kings from captivity.
This is the ware wherein consists my wealth;
And thus, methinks, should men of judgment frame
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,
And as their wealth increaseth, so inclose
Infinite riches in a little room.
But now how stands the wind?
Into what corner peers my halcyon's bill?
Ha! to the east? yes; see how stand the vanes?
East and by south. Why then, I hope my ships
I sent for Egypt and the bordering isles
Are gotten up by Nilus' winding banks;
Mine argosies from Alexandria,
Loaden with spice and silks, now under sail,
Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore
To Malta, through our Mediterranean Sea.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

The Vaunts of Tamburlaine

FROM "TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT"

Milton never surpassed the elevation of the concluding lines of this first passage taken from the great Elizabethan play which antedated Shakespeare. It was most likely a joint-stock play, put together by Marlowe, Nash and perhaps half a dozen others; for there are two consecutive plays on the subject, and the modern theater is not unacquainted with this species of manufacture. Marlowe and Spenser were the first English poets who perceived the beauty of words; not as apart from their significance, nor upon occasion only, as Chaucer did. These fine swinging passages are frequently surrounded with swaggering and noisy fustian. Here Tamburlaine speaks:

SO from the east unto the farthest west
Shall Tamburlaine extend his puissant arm.
The gallies and those pilling brigandines
That yearly sail to the Venetian gulf,
And hover in the Straits for Christian wreck,
Shall lie at anchor in the isle Arant,
Until the Persian fleet and men of wars,
Sailing along the Oriental sea,
Have fetched about the Indian continent,
Even from Persepolis to Mexico,
And thence unto the Straits of Jubaltàr.

* * * * *

The world will strive with hosts of men-at-arms,
To swarm unto the ensign I support:
Our quivering lances, shaking in the air,
And bullets, like Jove's dreadful thunderbolts,
Enrolled in flames and fiery smoldering mists,
Shall threat the gods more than Cyclopean wars;

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

And with our sun-bright armor as we march,
We'll chase the stars from heaven and dim their eyes
That stand and muse at our admirèd arms.

* * * * *

Meander: Your majesty shall shortly have your wish,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis.

Tamburlaine: "And ride in triumph through Persepolis!"

Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles?
Usumcasane and Theridimas,
Is it not passing brave to be a king,
"And ride in triumph through Persepolis?"

* * * * *

The god of war resigns his room to me,
Meaning to make me general of the world:
Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne.
Wherever I come the Fatal Sisters sweat,
And grisly Death, by running to and fro,
To do their ceaseless homage to my sword.
Millions of souls sit on the banks of Styx,
Waiting the back return of Charon's boat:
Hell and Elysium swarm with ghosts of men,
That I have sent from sundry foughten fields,
To spread my fame through Hell and up to Heaven.

* * * * *

[*To the captive kings*]

I will, with engines never exercised,
Conquer, sack and utterly consume
Your cities and your golden palaces;
And, with the flames that beat against the clouds,
Incense the heavens, and make the stars to melt,

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

As if they were the stars of Mahomet,
For hot consumption of his country's pride;
And, till by vision or by speech I hear
Immortal Jove say "Cease, my Tamburlaine,"
I will persist, a terror to the world,
Making the meteors (that, like armed men,
Are seen to march upon the towers of Heaven)
Run tilting round about the firmament,
And break their burning lances in the air.

* * * * *

[*Here he speaks to the captive kings harnessed in his chariot.*]

Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!
What! can ye draw but twenty miles a day,
And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine—
But from Asphaltis, where I conquered you,
To Byron here, where thus I honor you!
The horse that guide the golden eye of heaven,
And blow the morning from their nosterils,
Making their fiery gait above the clouds,
Are not so honored in their governor,
As you, ye slaves, in mighty Tamburlaine.
Through the streets with troops of conquered kings,
I'll ride in golden armor like the sun;
And in my helm a triple plume shall spring,
Spangled with diamonds, dancing in the air,
To note me emperor of the threefold world,
Like to an almond tree y-mounted high
Upon the lofty and celestial mount
Of ever-green Selinus quaintly decked
With blooms more white than Erycina's brows,
Whose tender blossoms tremble every one,

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

At every little breath through heaven is blown.
Then in my coach, like Saturn's royal son
Mounted, his shining chariot gilt with fire,
And drawn with princely eagles through the path
Paved with bright crystal and enchased with stars,
When all the gods stand gazing at his pomp;
So will I ride through Samarcanda streets,
Until my soul, dissevered from this flesh,
Shall mount the milk-white way, and meet him there.
To Babylon, my lords—to Babylon!

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ENGLAND, 1564-1616

Now we come to the world's greatest poet; and yet Robert Greene (a contemporary) in his *Grote's-worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance*, had the folly to call Shakespeare "an upstart crow beautified with our feathers." So little was Shakespeare honored in his own day by some of the feather-weights! Consider these typical flights:

Lorenzo: "There's not the smallest orb, which thou
 beholdest,

But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Cleopatra: "I am fire and air: my other elements
I give to baser life. So, have you done?
Come then and take the last warmth of my lips.
Farewell. . . ."

Prospero: "These our actors
(As I foretold you) were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

*Titania, when enamored of Bottom, a stupid fellow with
an ass's head:*

"Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheek do coy
And stick musk roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large eyes, my gentle joy."

FROM Sonnets: "Full many a glorious morning have I
seen

Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy."

FROM Sonnets: "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor
boundless sea,

But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?"

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

FROM *Twelfth Night*: "Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath,
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O, prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it."

What can we say of this Will Shakespeare in a brief space? We can only refer to the many facets of his glittering greatness. The passages which head this note indicate (insufficiently as a mere handful must) the surge and peal and clangor and cry of his varied verse, as well as the widely-darting sunrays of his imagination. Recollect that his genius was broad as the world, profound as man's thinking heart. It included the subtle-spinning spider Iago, the philosophic Hamlet, the magnificent buffoon Falstaff, the spotless Imogen, and those hundred others—Lady Macbeth, Brutus, Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Cordelia—enough to make a girdle of the globe. How, short of the idolatry that Ben Jonson eschewed, can we worship adequately the poet who wrote both *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, both *Twelfth Night* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, who could compose with equal success a *Love's Labor Lost* full of quaint euphuistic wit, a *Midsummer Night's Dream* of moonlight and folly and folk-lore, and a *Merchant of Venice* gorgeous as the Renaissance? How, short of idolatry, shall we worship the writer of the chief sonnets of his time, whose mere music, gainsaying sense, soars and sweeps with soul-satisfying flight? How shall we worship the dramatic genius who, knowing less of dramatic construction than Ben Jonson or many a college professor of our time, gave to his plays the supreme construction—that of life?

Shakespeare exhausts nearly all mortal experience and takes a few steps into the immortal world. He knows something of the strange secrets let out by death.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

His characters are legion, yet each one stands distinct. Each one represents a family, yet each one has his own uniqueness. He is a species individualized. He is of no special sect, no mere locality. Thus the plays are addressed to universal man.

Shakespeare searched the heart for its hopes, ambitions, rages, frailties, forces, despairs, hidden impulses. He comes with some kind of answer to all the questions besieging the mind of man, questions of love, hate, purpose, struggle, death, freedom, fate—all the origins, battles and issues of human life. He looks on all mortals with calm unpartisan eyes.

He has at times the sublimity of Milton, the humor of Chaucer, the fantasy of Spenser.

Shakespeare's most individual preeminence as a poet is in his imaginative use of word and phrase. How strikingly is the connotation of legal terms amplified in the great metaphor:

"When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past."

What instantaneous pity in

". . . those boughs that shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."

Where else shall we look for thick-strewn imagery of such scope as "the backward and abysm of time", of such power as "to move wild laughter in the throat of death", of such grim irony as that slow-waning moon that Theseus deploras,

"Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue."

Where can we find a more delicate expression of the evanescence of beauty than in

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"The uncertain glory of an April day."

Shakespeare seems to know all the might and mystery of words. Abstract thoughts leap out into visible images, fresh and glowing, like forms from the molder's furnace. You remember how Hamlet answers his mother's question, "What have I done?"

"Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue, hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction makes
A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face doth glow,
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act."

It is interesting to know what the greatest modern Englishman has said of this astounding Shakespeare—interesting to know what Carlyle has said: "An English king, whom no time or chance, Parliament or combination of Parliaments can dethrone! This King Shakespeare, does he not shine, in crowned sovereignty over us all, as the noblest, gentlest, yet strongest of rallying signs? We can fancy him as radiant aloft over all the Nations of Englishmen a thousand years hence."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Winter

WHEN icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipped, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 To-whit!
To-who!—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel¹ the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 To-whit!
To-who!—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

¹ skim.

Under the Greenwood Tree

UNDER the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet-bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to live i' the sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Fairy Land

I

OVER hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green:
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those rubies, fairy favors;
In those freckles live their savors:
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

II

COME unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Curtsied when you have, and kissed—
The wild waves whist—

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Foot it featly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.
Hark, hark!
Bow, wow,
The watch-dogs bark:
Bow, wow.
Hark, hark! I hear
The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry, Cock-a-doodle-doo!

III

WHERE the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily:
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

IV

FULL fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! now I hear them—
Ding-dong, bell!

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sylvia

WHO is Silvia? What is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The Heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness:
Love doth to her eyes repair
To help him of his blindness;
And, being helped, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring.

Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind

BLOW, blow, thou winter wind:
Thou are not so unkind
As man's ingratitude:
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then heigh ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
That dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot:

Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp

As friend remembered not.

Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:

Then heigh ho, the holly!

This life is most jolly.

Take, O Take Those Lips Away

TAKE, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;

And those eyes, the break of day,

Lights that do mislead the morn!

But my kisses bring again,

Bring again;

Seals of love, but sealed in vain,

Sealed in vain!

Aubade

HARK! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise,

His steeds to water at those springs

On chaliced flowers that lies;

And winking Mary-buds begin

To ope their golden eyes:

With everything that pretty bin,

My lady sweet, arise!

Arise, arise!

Fidele

FEAR no more the heat o' the sun,
 Nor the furious winter's rages:
 Thou thy worldly task hast done,
 Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
 Golden lads and girls all must,
 As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great:
 Thou art past the tyrant's stroke.
 Care no more to clothe and eat;
 To thee the reed is as the oak:
 The sceptre, learning, physic, must
 All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
 Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone—
 Fear not slander, censure rash;
 Thou hast finished joy and moan:
 All lovers young, all lovers must
 Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
 Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
 Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
 Nothing ill come near thee!
 Quiet consummation have;
 And renownèd be thy grave!

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sonnets

XXIX

WHEN, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possest,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least.
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising—
Haply I think on thee; and then my state,
Like to the Lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

XXX

WHEN to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long-since-cancelled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

XXXIII

FULL many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:

Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all-triumphant splendor on my brow;
But out, alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.

Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;

Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun
staineth.

LXXIII

THAT time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold—
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st which makes thy love more
strong

To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

CVI

WHEN in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rime
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights;
Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have exprest
Even such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And for they looked but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing:
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

CXVI

LET me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
Oh, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken:
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom:
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sleep

FROM "SECOND PART OF HENRY IV."

HOW many thousand of my poorest subjects
Are at this hour asleep!—O sleep, O gentle
sleep,

Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?

Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state,
And lulled with sounds of sweetest melody?

O thou dull god! why liest thou with the vile,
In loathsome beds, and leav'st the kingly couch
A watch-case, or a common 'larum-bell?

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge,

And in the visitation of the winds,
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
With deafening clamors in the slippery clouds,
That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?

Canst thou, O partial sleep! give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude;
And in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down;
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Mercy

FROM "THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

I

THE quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown:
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings.
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings;
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

Moonlight and Music

FROM "THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

HOW sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sit, Jessica; look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. . . .

Therefore, the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones and floods;
Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.

Queen Mab

FROM "ROMEO AND JULIET"

O THEN, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies,
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep:
Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
Her traces, of the smallest spider's web;
Her collars, of the moonshine's watery beams;
Her whip, of cricket's bone; the lash, of film;
Her wagoner, a small grey-coated gnat,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not half so big as a round little worm,
Pricked from the lazy finger of a maid.
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel, or old grub,
Time out of mind the fairies' coach-makers.
And in this state she gallops night by night,
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on courtesies straight;
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.
Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;
And sometimes comes she with a tithe-pig's tail,
Tickling a parson's nose as a' lies asleep:
Then dreams he of another benefice!
Sometimes she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes;
And, being thus frightened, swears a prayer or two,
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
That plats the manes of horses in the night;
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Life

FROM "AS YOU LIKE IT"

ALL the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in his nurse's arms:
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad
Made to his mistress' eye-brow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then, the justice,
In fair round belly, with good capon lined,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion—
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Ay, but to Die

FROM "MEASURE FOR MEASURE"

AY, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world; or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed wordly life,
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment,
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

Man

FROM "MEASURE FOR MEASURE"

MAN, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A Royal Barge

FROM "ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

THE barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were
silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggared all description: she did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue,
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colored fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Spring Flowers

FROM "THE WINTER'S TALE"

. . . O Proserpina,
For the flowers now, that frightened thou let'st fall
From Dis's wagon! daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
On Cytherea's breath; pale primroses
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one!

Polonius Advises His Son

FROM "HAMLET"

GIVE thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy,
For the apparel oft proclaims the man.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Hamlet's Soliloquy

TO be, or not to be, that is the question—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them. To die—to sleep—
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to!—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die—to sleep—
To sleep!—perchance to dream!—ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life:
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

With a bare bodkin! Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death
(That undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns) puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

*Oh! That This Too Too Solid Flesh Would
Melt*

FROM "HAMLET"

O THAT this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.

* * * * *

Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature,
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead!—nay not so much, not two:
So excellent a King; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on. And yet, within a month—
Let me not think on't: Frailty, thy name is woman!—
A little month, or ere those shoes were old,
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears—why she, even she—
O Heaven! a beast that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourned longer—married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father,
Than I to Hercules. Within a month—
Ere the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her gallèd eyes—
She married. O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it can not come to, good;
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

Finale

FROM "THE TEMPEST"

OUR revels now are ended: these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind! We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The Poet Greatly Pictured

FROM "A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM"

I NEVER may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Epilogue to "Midsummer Night's Dream"

NOW the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf howls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night,
That the graves all gaping wide,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic: not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallowed house:
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

A Father's Fury

FROM "KING LEAR"

BLOW, winds! and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanes! spout
Till you have drenched our steeples.
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's molds, all germins spill at once,
That make ungrateful man!
Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters;
I tax not you, ye elements, with unkindness:
I never gave you kingdom, called you children:
You owe me no subscription: why, then let fall
Your horrible pleasure: here I stand, your slave;

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man;
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters joined
Your high engendered battles, 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes,
Unwhipped of justice: caitif, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming,
Hast practiced on man's life. Close pent-up guilt,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinned against, than sinning.

Lear's Prayer

FROM "KING LEAR"

O HEAVENS,
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down, and take my part!

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A Mind Diseased

FROM "MACBETH"

CANST thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

Macbeth's Murder Meditation

FROM "MACBETH"

IF it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly; if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor; this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or Heaven's cherubin, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'er-leaps itself
And falls on the other.

Guilty Conscience

FROM "MACBETH"

Note in this terrific passage how the dread silence is suddenly broken by a dramatic knocking from without. Note also that I give to the last line before Lady Macbeth's re-entrance an unusual and powerful meaning by placing a dash before "one red."

MACBETH. Methought I heard a voice cry,
"Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep"—the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast—

LADY MACBETH.

What do you mean?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

MACBETH. Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all
the house:

"Glamis hath murdered sleep; and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more—Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

LADY MACBETH. Who was it that thus cried? Why,
worthy thane,

You do unbend your noble strength, to think
So brainsickly of things.—Go, get some water,
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them, and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH. I'll go no more!
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again, I dare not.

LADY MACBETH. Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;
For it must seem their guilt.

[Exit. Knocking within.]

MACBETH. Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me, when every noise appalls me?
What hands are here! Ha! they pluck out mine eyes!
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green—one red.

Re-enter LADY MACBETH.

LADY MACBETH. My hands are of your color; but I
shame

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

To wear a heart so white. (*Knocking.*) I hear a knocking

At the south entry:—retire we to our chamber:

A little water clears us of this deed:

How easy is it, then! Your constancy

Hath left you unattended. (*Knocking.*) Hark, more knocking.

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,

And show us to be watchers:—be not lost

So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH. To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself. (*Knocking.*)

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst.

To-morrow

FROM "MACBETH"

TO-MORROW, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

If Music Be the Food of Love

FROM "TWELFTH NIGHT"

IF music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! it had a dying fall:
Oh! it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor. Enough! no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea: nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy,
That it alone is high fantastical.

She Never Told Her Love

FROM "TWELFTH NIGHT"

SHE never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

To Gild Refinèd Gold

FROM "KING JOHN"

TO gild refinèd gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

Sad Stories of the Death of Kings

FROM "KING RICHARD II "

OF comfort no man speak:
Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth;
Let's choose executors and talk of wills.
And yet not so—for what can we bequeath
Save our deposèd bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives, and all are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death,
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been deposèd, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposèd,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed—
All murdered: for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp;
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be feared, and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable; and humored thus
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!

So Work the Honey-Bees

FROM "KING HENRY V."

SO work the honey-bees,
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.
They have a king and officers of sorts,
Where some, like magistrates, correct at home;
Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad;
Others, like soldiers, armèd in their stings,
Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds,
Which pillage they with merry march bring home
To the tent-royal of their emperor:
Who, busied in his majesty, surveys
The singing masons building roofs of gold,
The civil citizens kneading up the honey,
The poor mechanic porters crowding in
Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate,
The sad-eyed justice with his surly hum,
Delivering o'er to executors pale
The lazy yawning drone.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Farewell to 'All My Greatness

FROM "KING HENRY VIII"

FAREWELL! a long farewell to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:
I feel my heart new opened. O! how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors.
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Mark Antony's Oration

FROM "JULIUS CÆSAR"

FRRIENDS, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;

I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interrèd with their bones;
So let it be with Cæsar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious;
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Cæsar answered it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,
For Brutus is an honorable man;
So are they all, all honorable men,
Come I to speak in Cæsar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me;
But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honorable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honorable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
O judgement! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

There Is A Tide in the Affairs of Men.

FROM "JULIUS CÆSAR"

THERE is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.

Brutus

FROM "JULIUS CÆSAR"

THIS was the noblest Roman of them all;
All the conspirators save only he
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar;
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Good Name

FROM "OTHELLO"

GOOD name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

Othello's Wooing

FROM "OTHELLO"

I WILL a round unvarnished tale deliver
Of my whole course of love. . . .
Her father loved me; oft invited me;
Still questioned me the story of my life
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have passed.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe,
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
And portance in my travel's history:
Wherein of antres vast, and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch
heaven,
It was my hint to speak, such was the process;

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline. . . .

My story being done,

She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange;
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:
She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished
That Heaven had made her such a man; she thanked
me;

And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint, I spake:
She loved me for the dangers I had passed;
And I loved her, that she did pity them.

Desdemona's Song

FROM "OTHELLO"

THE poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow:
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmured her
moans;
Sing willow, willow, willow;
Her salt tears fell from her, and softened the stones;
Sing willow, willow, willow;
Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve—
I called my love false love; but what said he then?
Sing willow, willow, willow:
If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Othello Reviews His Career

FROM "OTHELLO"

I HAVE done the State some service, and they
know 't;
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice; then, must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum.

THOMAS CAMPION

ENGLAND, 1567?-1619

THOMAS CAMPION, Doctor of Physicke", we select for special mention among the crowded galaxy of Elizabethan song-writers; for he was the most lyric of the lyric crew. His songs were intended to be sung, and of singable songs they are most persistently and changefully musical. Campion's first music-book, published in 1601, marks his position between the great outburst of Elizabethan passionateness and the classic grace of the early seventeenth century lyric. Ironically, being himself a rhymers, he has left us a treatise inveighing against rhyme in English poetry, urging the ancient quantitative versification.

THOMAS CAMPION

Devotion

FOLLOW thy fair sun, unhappy shadow!
 Though thou be black as night,
 And she made all of light,
Yet follow thy fair sun, unhappy, shadow!

Follow her, whose light thy light depriveth!
 Though here thou liv'st disgraced,
 And she in heaven is placed,
Yet follow her whose light the world reviveth!

Follow those pure beams, whose beauty burneth!
 That so have scorched thee
 As thou still black must be,
Till her kind beams thy black to brightness turneth.

Follow her, while yet her glory shineth!
 There comes a luckless night
 That will dim all her light;
And this the black unhappy shade divineth.

Follow still, since so thy fates ordained!
 The sun must have his shade,
 Till both at once do fade—
The sun still proved, the shadow still disdained.

THOMAS CAMPION

Vobiscum est Iope

WHEN thou must home to shades of underground,
And there arrived, a new admirèd guest,
The beauteous spirits do engirt thee round,
White Iope, blithe Helen, and the rest,
To hear the stories of thy finished love
From that smooth tongue whose music hell can move;

Then wilt thou speak of banqueting delights,
Of masques and revels which sweet youth did make,
Of tourneys and great challenges of knights,
And all these triumphs for thy beauty's sake:
When thou hast told these honors done to thee,
Then tell, O tell, how thou didst murder me!

Integer Vitæ

THE man of life upright,
Whose guiltless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds,
Or thought of vanity;

The man whose silent days
In harmless joys are spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude,
Nor sorrow discontent;

That man needs neither towers
Nor armor for defence,
Nor secret vaults to fly
From thunder's violence:

THOMAS CAMPION

He only can behold
With unaffrighted eyes
The horrors of the deep
And terrors of the skies.

Thus, scorning all the cares
That fate or fortune brings,
He makes the heaven his book,
His wisdom heavenly things;

Good thoughts his only friends,
His wealth a well-spent age,
The earth his sober inn
And quiet pilgrimage.

SIR HENRY WOTTON

ENGLAND, 1568-1639

Elizabeth of Bohemia

YOU meaner beauties of the night,
That poorly satisfy our eyes
More by your number than your light,
You common people of the skies;
What are you when the moon shall rise?

You curious chanterers of the wood,
That warble forth Dame Nature's lays,
Thinking your passions understood
By your weak accents; what's your praise
When Philomel her voice shall raise?

You violets that first appear,
By your pure purple mantles known
Like the proud virgins of the year,
As if the spring were all your own;
What are you when the rose is blown?

So, when my mistress shall be seen
In form and beauty of her mind,
By virtue first, then choice, a Queen,
Tell me, if she were not designed
The eclipse and glory of her kind.

BARTHOLOMEW GRIFFIN

ENGLAND, 16TH CENTURY

Fair Is My Love

FAIR is my Love that feeds among the lilies,
The lilies growing in that pleasant garden
Where Cupid's Mount that well belovèd hill is,
And where that little god himself is warden.
See where my Love sits in the beds of spices,
Beset all round with camphor, myrrh and roses,
And interlaced with curious devices
Which her apart from all the world incloses!

There doth she tune her lute for her delight,
And with sweet music makes the ground to move,
Whilst I, poor I, do sit in heavy plight;
Wailing alone my unrespected love—
Not daring rush into so fair a place,
That gives to her, and she to it, a grace.

SIR JOHN DAVIES
ENGLAND, 1569-1626

Man

I KNOW my soul hath power to know all
things,

Yet she is blind and ignorant in all:
I know I'm one of Nature's little kings,
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.
I know my life's a pain and but a span;

I know my sense is mocked in everything.
And, to conclude, I know myself a Man—
Which is a proud and yet a wretched thing.

THOMAS DEKKER
ENGLAND, 1570-1641

The First True Gentleman

FROM "THE HONEST WHORE"

PATIENCE! why, 'tis the soul of peace:
Of all the virtues, 'tis nearest kin to Heaven:
It makes men look like gods. The best of men
That ever wore earth about him was a sufferer,
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit—
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

SIR ROBERT AYTON

SCOTLAND, 1570-1638

To His Forsaken Mistress

I DO confess thou'rt smooth and fair,
And I might have gone near to love thee,
Had I not found the slightest prayer
That lips could move, had power to move thee;
But I can let thee now alone
As worthy to be loved by none.

I do confess thou'rt sweet; yet find
Thee such an unthrift of thy sweets,
Thy favors are but like the wind
That kisseth everything it meets:
And since thou canst with more than one,
Thou'rt worthy to be kissed by none.

The morning rose that untouched stands
Armed with her briers, how sweet she smells!
But plucked and strained through ruder hands,
Her sweets no longer with her dwells;
But scent and beauty both are gone,
And leaves fall from her, one by one.

Such fate ere long will thee betide
When thou hast handled been awhile,
With sere flowers to be thrown aside;
And I shall sigh, while some will smile,
To see thy love to every one
Hath brought thee to be loved by none.

JOHN DONNE

ENGLAND, 1573-1631

DONNE's poems were first collected in 1633. They cover an extraordinary range in subject—amorous, religious, satiric—and are distinguished by a strange originality, both fascinating and repellant. His poems are mainly the product of his youth. There is a solemn passionate earnestness about them, a quality which underlies the fanciful conceits which characterize and often mar them. Donne, whose contemporary reputation as a poet, and still more as a preacher, was immense, was the founder of a school of poetry which expressed and represented a certain over-intellectual bad taste of his day. He was Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, where he was buried.

Ben Jonson, censuring the poet's metrical license, called Donne the first poet in the world for some things. Donne would have been the first poet in many things had he been able to curb his wit, his realism, his prose energy. Too often his mind attempts to pull two ways at once, thwarting his purpose, tearing his subject to pieces. There is an irreconcilable struggle going ever on between his intense emotion and his witty intelligence.

Here is Coleridge's comprehensive epigram on Donne:

"With Donne, whose muse on dromedary trots,
Wreath iron pokers into true-love knots—
Rhyme's sturdy cripple, fancy's maze and clue,
Wit's forge and fire-blast, meaning's press and screw."

JOHN DONNE

Song

GO and catch a falling star,
Get with child a mandrake root,
Tell me where all past years are,
Or who cleft the Devil's foot;
Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
Or to keep off envy's stinging,
And find
What wind
Serves to advance an honest mind.

If thou beest born to strange sights,
Things invisible go see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights
Till Age snow white hairs on thee;
Thou, when thou returnest, wilt tell me
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And swear
No where
Lives a woman true and fair.

If thou findest one, let me know;
Such a pilgrimage were sweet.
Yet do not; I would not go,
Though at next door we might meet.
Though she were true when you met her,
And last till you write your letter,
Yet she
Will be
False, ere I come, to two or three.

BEN JONSON

ENGLAND, 1573-1637

WE know Ben Jonson more intimately than we know any of his literary associates; for, besides numerous contemporary references supplying characteristic touches, his egotism make his works a gallery of self-portraiture. We have full information of his learning and his literary theories, his humors, his quarrels, his ailments, his incarcerations, his wit-and-drinking bouts. He was a "galleon built far higher for learning, solid but slow in his performances", whereas (the same Fuller tells us) Shakespeare was that "English man-of-war", able to take "advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." Jonson, though he probably guessed it not, would have been a splendid character for one of his own plays dealing with the idiosyncrasy of human nature. He was capable of extremes, could be gross and tender, rake-helly and studious, quarrelsome and devoted.

Jonson made a deliberate choice between kinds of writing, either of which his genius could have mastered. He might have been a romantic, but his stubbornly held and often arrogantly expressed theories caused him to become classicist and realist instead. The result is that although the bulk of his work is not facile reading, as a dramatist he ranks second only to Shakespeare among the later contemporaries of the bard. In a harsh, unsentimental type of comedy, he is supreme; the character of Sir Epicure Mammon is a masterpiece. *Sejanus* illustrates his theories of dramatic art in tragedy. In the masque, Jonson was unrivalled in his time for the wit, wisdom, and real poetry of his libretti; and only Milton could improve upon his instruction. In his prose, he was at daggers drawn with the fantastic, highflown, euphuistic style of the times; he

BEN JONSON

attains the simplicity and lucidity of a later century; and although he derided the essayists, his *Discoveries* contain many gems of the essay form with ideas borrowed from Latin writers.

Jonson has been accused of being the greatest of all plagiarists. So I say of him in a little poem on books:

"So great his plunderings
It placed him in the rank of kings."

If Jonson was a thief, what shall we say of Shakespeare, what of Chaucer, who would have disdained to tell a tale of his own devising? The question one must always ask is, "Has the borrower lifted and ennobled what he has appropriated?" If not, he deserves censure. But if he has found brick and left it marble, he deserves our gratitude.

Our interest in Jonson is as lyric poet rather than as dramatist. When he does achieve his occasional lyric excellence, he is superb. He pens "lyrics carved in marble, or rhymed cameos." Often, however, he achieves a freshness and sweet-smellingness quite unsurpassed. His last, unfinished, work, *The Sad Shepherd*, a pastoral play uniting fancifully the story of Robin Hood and a fairy tale, is among the delights of the Muse. Here sprightly wit is combined with poetic charm—all the more remarkable in that the play was written in his later years when he was sorely tried by failure and poverty. Having in mind the pensive music of *The Sad Shepherd*, as well as the best of his lyrics and of his epitaphs, we may with reverence echo the words upon his grave:

"O rare Ben Jonson!"

BEN JONSON

Hymn to Diana

QUEEN and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose:
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wishèd sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever—
Thou that makest a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

To Celia

This was a favorite with its author. And yet it so happens that "this airy and apparently spontaneous lyric", to quote John Addington Symonds, "is almost literally transmuted into rhyme and metre from scattered phrases in the prose of an old Greek sophist."

D RINK to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup
And I'll not look for wine.

BEN JONSON

The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honoring thee
As giving it a hope that there
It could not withered be;
But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself but thee!

Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke

UNDERNEATH this marble hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,
Sydney's sister—Pembroke's mother.
Death, ere thou hast slain another
Fair and wise and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee!

Marble piles let no man raise
To her name in after days;
Some kind woman, born as she,
Reading this, like Niobe
Shall turn marble, and become
Both her mourner and her tomb.

BEN JONSON

Simplex Munditiis

STILL to be neat, still to be drest,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of art:
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

She

FROM "LOVE'S CHARIOT"

HAVE you seen but a bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall of the snow
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of the beaver,
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud of the brier,
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee? . . .
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

BEN JONSON

Greatness in Littleness

FROM "AN ODE TO SIR LUCIUS CARY AND
SIR H. MORRISON"

IT is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald and sear;
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be.

*To the Memory of My Beloved Master
William Shakespeare, and What He
Hath Left Us*
[1564-1616]

TO draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;
While I confess thy writings to be such
As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much.
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise;
For silliest ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right;
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
And think to ruin, where it seemed to raise.
These are, as some infamous bawd or whore

Should praise a matron. What could hurt her more?
 But thou art proof against them, and, indeed,
 Above the ill fortune of them, or the need.
 I therefore will begin: Soul of the age!
 The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!
 My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
 Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
 A little further, to make thee a room:
 Thou art a monument without a tomb,
 And art alive still while thy book doth live
 And we have wits to read and praise to give.
 That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses—
 I mean with great, but disproportioned Muses;
 For if I thought my judgment were of years,
 I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
 And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
 Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line;
 And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
 From thence to honor thee, I would not seek
 For names; but call forth thundering Æschylus,
 Euripides, and Sophocles to us;
 Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
 To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,
 And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,
 Leave thee alone for the comparison
 Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
 Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
 To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
 He was not for an age, but for all time!
 And all the Muses still were in their prime,
 When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
 Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!
 Nature herself was proud of his designs
 And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines,

BEN JONSON

Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please;
But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.
Yet must I not give Nature all; thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion; and, that he¹
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame,
Or, for the laurel, he may gain a scorn;
For a good poet's made, as well as born.
And such wert thou! Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-turned and true-filed lines;
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James!
But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
Advanced, and made a constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage
Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage,
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like
night,
And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

¹ That he—that man.

RICHARD BARNEFIELD

ENGLAND, 1574-1627

Philomel

AS it fell upon a day
In the merry month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade
Which a grove of myrtles made,
Beasts did leap and birds did sing,
Trees did grow and plants did spring;
Everything did banish moan
Save the Nightingale alone:
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,
Leaned her breast up-till a thorn,
And there sung the dolefullest ditty,
That to hear it was great pity.
Fie, fie, fie! now would she cry;
Tereu, Tereu! by and by;
That to hear her so complain
Scarce I could from tears refrain;
For her griefs so lively shown
Made me think upon mine own.
Ah! thought I, thou mournest in vain,
None takes pity on thy pain:
Senseless trees they cannot hear thee,
Ruthless beasts they will not cheer thee:
King Pandion he is dead,
All thy friends are lapped in lead;
All thy fellow birds do sing
Careless of thy sorrowing:
Even so, poor bird, like thee,
None alive will pity me.

JOHN FLETCHER

ENGLAND, 1579-1625

IT is now known that the collaboration of Beaumont and Fletcher included only a few of the vast collection of plays to which their names are attached, and that their versifications, once held indistinguishable, may usually be told apart. For instinctive lyric gift, however, the dramas of the two comrades are inferior to that specimen of Fletcher's lone hand, written in the youthful beginning of his career, *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Here some of the octosyllabics remind us of passages in the earlier Milton; and only seldom did Milton write more deftly, more deliciously:

"Thou divinest, fairest, brightest,
Thou most powerful Maid, and whitest,
Thou most virtuous and most blessed,
Eyes of stars, and golden tressèd,
Like Apollo, tell me, Sweetest,
What new service now is meetest
For the Satyr? Shall I stray
In the middle air, and stay
The sailing rack, or nimbly take
Hold by the moon, and gently make
Suit to the pale queen of night
For a beam to give thee light?
Shall I dive into the sea,
And bring the coral, making way
Through the rising waves that fall
In snowy fleeces? Dearest, shall
I catch the wanton fawns, or flies
Whose woven wings the summer dyes
Of many colors? Get thee fruit?
Or steal from heaven old Orpheus' lute?"

JOHN FLETCHER

The many songs scattered throughout the plays, most of them ascribed to Fletcher, are of singable quality, and a round dozen of them would not have shamed Shakespeare.

There is an old belief, scarcely more than a tradition, that of this couple Fletcher was creator, Beaumont critic. Without too serious credence to this saying, we can recognize in Fletcher a fluency and elasticity touching all the stops of feeling; whereas in the poetry known to be Beaumont's alone, there is a hint of austerity and even of grandeur. I am thinking especially of the great epitaph *On the Tombs in Westminster* and of the poem *Upon an Honest Man's Fortune*, from which are the following terse lines. Note their solemn strength, their high finality:

"Man is his own star, and the soul than can
Render an honest and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late:
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."

Aspatia's Song

LAY a garland on my hearse
Of the dismal yew;
Maidens, willow branches bear:
Say, I died true.
My love was false, but I was firm;
From my hour of birth.
Upon my buried body lie
Lightly, gentle earth!

JOHN FLETCHER

Hymn to Pan

SING his praises that doth keep
Our flocks from harm,
Pan, the father of our sheep;
And arm in arm
Tread we softly in a round,
Whilst the hollow neighboring ground
Fills the music with her sound.

Pan, O great god Pan, to thee
Thus do we sing!
Thou who keepest us chaste and free
As the young spring:
Ever be thy honor spoke
From that place the morn is broke,
To that place day doth unyoke!

Hear, ye Ladies

HEAR, ye ladies that despise
What the mighty Love has done;
Fear examples and be wise:
Fair Callisto was a nun;
Leda, sailing on the stream
To deceive the hopes of man,
Love accounting but a dream,
Doted on a silver swan:
Danaë, in a brazen tower,
Where no love was, loved a shower.

JOHN FLETCHER

Hear, ye ladies that are coy,
What the mighty Love can do;
Fear the fierceness of the boy.
The chaste Moon he makes to woo:
Vesta, kindling holy fires,
Circled round about with spies,
Never dreaming loose desires,
Doting at the altar dies:
Ilion, in a short hour, higher
He can build, and once more fire.

Melancholy

HENCE, all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly!
There's naught in this life sweet,
If men were wise to see't,
But only melancholy—
O sweetest melancholy!
Welcome, folded arms and fixèd eyes,
A sight that piercing mortifies,
A look that's fastened to the ground,
A tongue chained up without a sound!

Fountain-heads and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves!
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly housed, save bats and owls!
A midnight bell, a parting groan—
These are the sounds we feed upon:
Then stretch your bones in a still gloomy valley:
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

JOHN FLETCHER

Song

FROM "VALENTINIAN"

CARE-CHARMING sleep, thou easer of all
 woes,
Brother to Death, sweetly thyself dispose
On this afflicted prince; fall, like a cloud,
In gentle showers; give nothing that is loud,
Or painful to his slumbers; easy, sweet,
And as a purling stream, thou son of Night,
Pass by his troubled senses; sing his pain,
Like hollow murmuring wind, or silver rain.
Into this prince gently, oh, gently slide,
And kiss him into slumbers like a bride!

JOHN WEBSTER

ENGLAND, FLOURISHED 1602—1624

NOT even the birth-and-death dates of this illustrious Elizabethan dramatic poet are known. He was author of several plays and collaborator in several. His chief work is *The Tragedy of the Duchess of Malfy*, which with understandable enthusiasm has been pronounced "the finest tragedy in the English language outside the works of Shakespeare." Webster has a superficial resemblance to Baudelaire and Poe in his tendency toward the sepulchral and terrible. Whatever were his defects as a dramatist, he has claim to be recognized as one of the poetic geniuses of his time, one who had a peculiar affinity with Shakespeare. There is in him "a quality of pity for which outside Shakespeare and Webster we may look in vain"; and sometimes, like the master, he is capable

JOHN WEBSTER

of fusing the poetic and the dramatic. Although remembered chiefly as the dramatist and poet of death, he has many passages of surprising tenderness and beauty. The horrors with which he is prodigal are of the soul; and the vices and crimes he paints have, notwithstanding their extravagance, an appearance of terrible reality.

Says John Addington Symonds: "Webster rises to Shakespeare's shoulder by his sincerity, nobility, and unerring truth to life in its most thrilling moments."

A Dirge

CALL for the robin-redbreast and the wren,
Since o'er shady groves they hover,
And with leaves and flowers do cover
The friendless bodies of unburied men.
Call unto his funeral dole
The ant, the field-mouse, and the mole,
To rear him hillocks that shall keep him warm,
And (when gay tombs are robbed) sustain no harm;
But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men,
For with his nails he'll dig them up again.

The Heart-cry of the Duchess

FROM "THE DUCHESS OF MALFI"

OH, that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the
dead!
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here. I'll tell thee a miracle:
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow:
The heaven over my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.

JOHN WEBSTER

I am acquainted with sad misery,
As the tanned galley-slave is with his oar:
Necessity makes me suffer constantly,
And custom makes it easy.

The Shrouding of the Duchess of Malfi

HARK! Now everything is still,
The screech-owl and the whistler shrill,
Call upon our dame aloud,
And bid her quickly don her shroud!

Much you had of land and rent;
Your length in clay's now competent:
A long war disturbed your mind;
Here your perfect peace is signed.

Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,
Their life a general mist of error,
Their death a hideous storm of terror.
Strew your hair with powders sweet,
Don clean linen, bathe your feet,
And—the foul fiend more to check—
A crucifix let bless your neck:
'Tis now full tide 'tween night and day;
End your groan and come away.

JOHN WEBSTER

Vanitas Vanitatum

ALL the flowers of the spring
Meet to perfume our burying;
These have but their growing prime,
And man does flourish but his time:
Survey our progress from our birth—
We are set, we grow, we turn to earth.
Courts adieu, and all delights,
All bewitching appetites!

Sweetest breath and clearest eye
Like perfumes go out and die;
And consequently this is done
As shadows wait upon the sun.
Vain the ambition of kings
Who seek by trophies and dead things
To leave a living name behind,
And weave but nets to catch the wind.

WILLIAM BASSE

ENGLAND, 1583-1653

An Epitaph

RENOWNÈD Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learnèd Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lie
A little nearer Spenser, to make room
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold Tomb.
To lodge all four in one bed make a shift
Until Doomsday, for hardly will a fifth
Betwixt this day and that by Fate be slain
For whom your curtains may be drawn again.

WILLIAM BASSE

If your precedency in death doth bar
A fourth place in your sacred sepulchre,
Under this carvèd marble of thine own,
Sleep, rare Tragedian, Shakespeare, sleep alone.
Thy unmolested peace, unsharèd Cave,
Possess as Lord, not Tenant, of thy Grave;
That unto us and others it may be
Honor hereafter to be laid by thee.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND, OF HAWTHORNDEN

SCOTLAND, 1585-1649

DRUMMOND was essentially a man of letters, using "all the forces at the command of his exquisite nature to become a better poet than he ever could be." For most of his life he lived quietly at his home, nursing his sorrow for a dead love, and "brooding in discontent, for the most part silent, over the slow but certain triumph of Argyle and his Presbyterians." He corresponded with Drayton, and on a famous occasion was visited by Ben Jonson.

Drummond chose to write English rather than his native Scots. For the most part he used lyric measures, but his range was wide: "Amorous, Funerall, Divine, Pastoral". In his madrigals, and particularly in some of the sonnets upon his lost Mary Cunningham, Drummond showed command of grace and passion. His prose tract, *The Cypresse Grove*, a discourse upon Death, is often considered the finest product of his pen. Altogether, considering his scholarship and the metaphysical dangers of the time, Drummond must be admired for his comparative abstinence from the conceits of his age and for his frequent achievement of extreme beauty.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND

Song

PHŒBUS, arise!
And paint the sable skies
With azure, white and red:
Rouse Memnon's mother from her Tithon's bed
That she thy cáreer may with roses spread:
The nightingales thy coming each-where sing:
Make an eternal spring!
Give life to this dark world which lieth dead;
Spread forth thy golden hair
In larger locks than thou wast wont before,
And emperor-like decore
With diadem of pearl thy temples fair:
Chase hence the ugly night
Which serves but to make dear thy glorious light.

This is that happy morn,
That day, long-wishèd day,
Of all my life so dark
(If cruel stars had not my ruin sworn
And fates not hope betray)
Which, purely white, deserves
An everlasting diamond should it mark.
This is the morn should bring unto this grove
My Love, to hear and recompense my love.
Fair king, who all preserves,
But show thy blushing beams,
And thou two sweeter eyes
Shalt see than those which by Penéus' streams
Did once thy heart surprise.
Nay, suns which shine as clear
As thou, when two thou didst to Rome appear.
Now, Flora, deck thyself in fairest guise:

WILLIAM DRUMMOND

If that ye winds would hear
A voice surpassing far Amphion's lyre,
Your stormy chiding stay;
Let Zephyr only breathe,
And with her tresses play,
Kissing sometimes these purple ports of death.

The winds all silent are,
And Phœbus in his chair
Ensaffroning sea and air
Makes vanish every star:
Night like a drunkard reels
Beyond the hills, to shun his flaming wheels:
The fields with flowers are decked in every hue,
The clouds with orient gold spangle their blue;
Here is the pleasant place—
And nothing wanting is, save She, alas!

FRANCIS BEAUMONT

ENGLAND, 1586-1616

On the Tombs in Westminster Abbey

MORTALITY, behold and fear!
What a change of flesh is here!
Think how many royal bones
Sleep within this heap of stones:
Here they lie had realms and lands,
Who now want strength to stir their hands:
Where from their pulpits sealed with dust
They preach, 'In greatness is no trust.'
Here's an acre sown indeed
With the richest, royallest seed
That the earth did e'er suck in
Since the first man died for sin:
Here the bones of birth have cried—
'Though gods they were, as men they died.'
Here are sands, ignoble things,
Dropt from the ruined sides of kings:
Here's a world of pomp and state,
Buried in dust, once dead by fate.

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, LATE 17TH CENTURY

Tom-o'-Bedlam's Song

Here are half a dozen stanzas from a curious and almost forgotten nonsense song come down to us from the rich reliquary of old English poetry. Study them: they will test your wits. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson mix a whiff of the spirit of this song into some of their admirable fooleries. We get a lilt of it in Scott's novel, "The Heart of Midlothian"; while we find four lines of the last stanza at the head of Poe's tale, "The Unparalleled Adventures of Hans Pfaall." John Galsworthy has plucked a title from this poetic crow's nest. Others have snatched chance feathers for their literary uses. Clement Wood, sketching the history of this song, says: "It is tardy time that the 'Tom-a-Bedlam Song' be restored to its place as one of the few supreme mad songs of the language."

FROM the hag and hungry goblin
That into rage would rend ye,
And the spirit that stands
By the naked man
In the book of moons, defend ye,
That of your five sound senses
You never be forsaken,
Nor wander from
Yourself with Tom,
Abroad to beg your bacon.

ANONYMOUS

I know more than Apollo;
For oft, when he lies sleeping,
 I behold the stars
 At mortal wars,
And the rounded welkin weeping.

The moon's my constant mistress,
And the lovely owl my morrow;
 The flaming drake
 And night-crow make
Me music to my sorrow.

When I want provant, with Humphrey
I sup, and when benighted
 I repose in Paul's
 With waking souls,
Yet never am affrighted.

With a host of furious fancies
Whereof I am commander,
 With a burning spear
 And a horse of air
To the wilderness I wander.

By a knight of ghosts and shadows
I summoned am to tourney
 Ten leagues beyond
 The wide world's end—
Methinks it is no journey.

GEORGE WITHER

ENGLAND, 1588-1667

WITHER was a voluminous versifier, who has to his credit a few lyric collections and pastoral pieces, such as *Fair Virtue* and *Shepherd's Hunting*, which have kept his memory green. Elizabeth Barrett Browning extols Wither as "a poet who has been misprized by some of his own kind—a true sincere poet of blessed oracles." Had his last work been his lyric beginning "Shall I, wasting in despair", his merit as a fascinating lyrist would never have been challenged. It is generally conceded that the best of the voluminous writings of Wither's long life was produced in the span of years between 1613 and 1623. Wither is perhaps the type of the transitionists of seventeenth-century poetry, for after his Spenserian song and music, the repressive, "denying" force of the Puritan begins to be felt.

The Author's Resolution

SHALL I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Or make pale my cheeks with care
'Cause another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flowery meads in May,
If she think not well of me,
What care I how fair she be?

GEORGE WITHER

Shall my silly heart be pined
'Cause I see a woman kind?
Or a well disposèd nature
Joinèd with a lovely feature?
Be she meeker, kinder, than
Turtle-dove or pelican,
If she be not so to me,
What care I how kind she be?

Shall a woman's virtues move
Me to perish for her love?
Or her well-deservings known
Make me quite forget my own?
Be she with that goodness blest
Which may merit name of Best,
If she be not such to me,
What care I how good she be?

'Cause her fortune seems too high,
Shall I play the fool and die?
She that bears a noble mind,
If not outward helps she find,
Thinks what with them he would do
That without them dares her woo;
And unless that mind I see,
What care I how great she be?

Great, or good, or kind, or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair;
If she love me, this believe,
I will die ere she shall grieve;
If she slight me when I woo,
I can scorn and let her go;
For if she be not for me,
What care I for whom she be?

WILLIAM BROWNE, OF TAVISTOCK

ENGLAND, 1591-1643

AT its best, Browne's poetry is like a breath of sweet country air, or the scent of newly mown hay. He undoubtedly knew Shakespeare personally, as he was one of that group of brilliant young men in Elizabethan London who called themselves "the sons of Ben Jonson." Brown was one of the direct inspirations of the young Milton, and of John Keats.

The Sirens' Song

STEER, hither steer your wingèd pines,
All beaten mariners!
Here lie love's undiscovered mines,
A prey to passengers—
Perfumes far sweeter than the best
Which make the Phoenix' urn and nest.
Fear not your ships,
Nor any to oppose you save our lips;
But come on shore,
Where no joy dies till Love hath gotten more.

For swelling waves our panting breasts,
Where never storms arise,
Exchange, and be awhile our guests:
For stars gaze on our eyes.
The compass Love shall hourly sing,
And as he goes about the ring,
We will not miss
To tell each point he nameth with a kiss.
Then come on shore,
Where no joy dies till Love hath gotten more.

WILLIAM BROWNE

Song

FOR her gait, if she be walking;
Be she sitting, I desire her
For her state's sake; and admire her
For her wit if she be talking;
Gait and state and wit approve her;
For which all and each I love her.

Be she sullen, I commend her
For a modest. Be she merry,
For a kind one her prefer I.
Briefly, everything doth lend her
So much grace, and so approve her,
That for everything I love her.

My Choice

SHALL I tell you whom I love?
Hearken then awhile to me;
And if such a woman move
As I now shall versify,
Be assured 't is she or none,
That I love, and love alone.

Nature did her so much right
As she scorns the help of art.
In as many virtues dight
As e'er yet embraced a heart.
So much good so truly tried,
Some for less were deified.

WILLIAM BROWNE

Wit she hath, without desire
To make known how much she hath;
And her anger flames no higher
Than may fitly sweeten wrath.
Full of pity as may be,
Though perhaps not so to me.

Reason masters every sense,
And her virtues grace her birth;
Lovely as all excellence,
Modest in her most of mirth.
Likelihood enough to prove
Only worth could kindle love.

Such she is; and if you know
Such a one as I have sung:
Be she brown, or fair, or so
That she be but somewhat young;
Be assured 't is she, or none,
That I love, and love alone.

ROBERT HERRICK

ENGLAND, 1591-1674

ALTHOUGH Herrick—rector of Dean Prior Church, Devonshire—lived and sang three centuries ago, it was not until the close of the eighteenth century that England awoke to the fact that in him she possessed a poet of the rarest lyrical quality. Herrick himself never doubted the fact, stating it, perhaps not too modestly, in countless quatrains and couplets which were not taken at their face value during his lifetime. Many poets have announced their arrival, yet not arrived!

A classic sense for economy, smoothness, point; a fancy clothed in musical numbers; a knack of finding the unguessable but inevitable word; a training at the hands of Ben Jonson and a life part spent in rollicking London, part in that Devonshire he found dull—these are the factors and elements that make him the chief English pastoral poet and one of the most sunny and alluring of all English lyrists. With the Latin qualities of form, he mingles a charming homeliness of English subject and feeling. However Herrick himself may have affected to despise them, he made perennially beautiful the scenes, festivities, and sports of the countryside: the “hock-cart”, the hayfield, the may-pole, the wedding-cake, the wassail-bowl, the flowers—daffodils, violets, primroses, cherry-blossoms, the animals—lamb, spaniel, cat, “learned pig.”

Being a royalist sympathizer, he was ejected from his church by Oliver Cromwell, and lived in London until 1662, when he was restored to his parish. He was buried there.

Corinna's Going a-Maying

GET up, get up for shame! The blooming morn
 Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.
 See how Aurora throws her fair
 Fresh-quilted colors through the air:
 Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see
 The dew bespangling herb and tree!
 Each flower has wept and bowed toward the east
 Above an hour since, yet you not drest;
 Nay! not so much as out of bed?
 When all the birds have matins said
 And sung their thankful hymns, 'tis sin,
 Nay, profanation, to keep in;
 Whereas a thousand virgins on this day
 Spring sooner than the lark, to fetch in May.

Rise and put on your foliage, and be seen
 To come forth, like the spring-time, fresh and green,
 And sweet as Flora. Take no care
 For jewels for your gown or hair:
 Fear not; the leaves will strew
 Gems in abundance upon you:
 Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,
 Against you come, some orient pearls unwept.
 Come, and receive them while the light
 Hangs on the dew-locks of the night;
 And Titan on the eastern hill
 Retires himself, or else stands still
 Till you come forth! Wash, dress, be brief in praying:
 Few beads¹ are best when once we go a-Maying.

beads] prayers.

ROBERT HERRICK

Come, my Corinna, come; and coming, mark
How each field turns a street, each street a park,
 Made green and trimmed with trees! see how
 Devotion gives each house a bough
 Or branch! each porch, each door, ere this,
 An ark, a tabernacle is,
Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove,
As if here were those cooler shades of love.
 Can such delights be in the street
 And open fields, and we not see 't?
 Come, we'll abroad: and let's obey
 The proclamation made for May,
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying;
But, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

There's not a budding boy or girl this day
But is got up and gone to bring in May.
 A deal of youth ere this is come
 Back, and with white-thorn laden home.
 Some have despatched their cakes and cream,
 Before that we have left to dream:
And some have wept and wooed, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth:
 Many a green-gown¹ has been given,
 Many a kiss, both odd and even:
 Many a glance, too, has been sent
 From out the eye, love's firmament:
Many a jest told of the keys betraying
This night, and locks picked: yet we're not a-Maying!

¹ green-gown] tumble on the grass.

ROBERT HERRICK

Come, let us go, while we are in our prime,
And take the harmless folly of the time!
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty.
Our life is short, and our days run
As fast away as does the sun.
And, as a vapor or a drop of rain,
Once lost, can ne'er be found again;
So when or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drowned with us in endless night.
Then, while time serves, and we are but decaying,
Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

To Daffodils

FAIR daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong;
And, having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

ROBERT HERRICK

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you or anything.

We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

Whenas in Silks My Julia Goes

WHENAS in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.
Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see
That brave vibration each way free;
Oh, how that glittering taketh me!

ROBERT HERRICK

The Night-piece: To Julia

HER eyes the glow-worm lend thee,
The shooting stars attend thee;
And the elves also,
Whose little eyes glow
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

No Will-o'-the-wisp mislight thee,
Nor snake nor slow-worm bite thee;
But on, on thy way
Not making a stay,
Since ghost there 's none to affright thee.

Let not the dark thee cumber:
What though the moon does slumber?
The stars of the night
Will lend thee their light
Like tapers clear without number.

Then, Julia, let me woo thee,
Thus, thus to come unto me;
And when I shall meet
Thy silvery feet,
My soul I'll pour into thee.

ROBERT HERRICK

To Primroses, Filled with Morning Dew

I quote this poem because it has two or three good lines and also because it illustrates the use of the conceit in poetry—a vicious offence. In this lyric Herrick exceeds rhetorical propriety in attributing our human sorrow to the primrose on the slight pretext that it happens to be sprinkled with tear-like dewdrops. In the last two lines, he reaches the grotesque in suggesting that these “tears” of the primrose indicate that it has been brought forth from sorrow. This is neither true to the fact, nor true to the imagination.

WHY do ye weep, sweet babes? Can tears
 Speak grief in you,
 Who were but born
 Just as the modest morn
 Teemed her refreshing dew?
Alas! you have not known that shower
 That mars a flower,
 Nor felt the unkind
 Breath of a blasting wind;
 Nor are ye worn with years,
 Or warped as we,
 Who think it strange to see
Such pretty flowers, like to orphans young,
Speaking by tears before ye have a tongue.

Speak, whimpering younglings, and make known
 The reason why
 Ye droop and weep;
Is it for want of sleep,
Or childish lullaby?

ROBERT HERRICK

Or that ye have not seen as yet
The violet?
Or brought a kiss
From that sweet heart to this?
No, no; this sorrow shown
By your tears shed,
Would have this lecture read:
"That things of greatest, so of meanest worth,
Conceived with grief are, and with tears brought
forth."

His Prayer for Absolution

FOR those my unbaptized rhymes,
Writ in my wild unhallowed times;
For every sentence, clause and word,
That's not inlaid with Thee, my Lord,
Forgive me, God, and blot each line
Out of my book that is not Thine.
But if, 'mongst all, Thou find'st here one
Worthy Thy benediction;
That one of all the rest shall be
The glory of my work and me.

A Thanksgiving for His House

LORD, Thou hast given me a cell,
Wherein to dwell;
A little house, whose humble roof
Is weather-proof,
Under the spars of which I lie
Both soft and dry;

ROBERT HERRICK

Where thou, my chamber for to ward,
Hast set a guard
Of harmless thoughts, to watch and keep
Me while I sleep.
Low is my porch, as is my fate,
Both void of state;
And yet the threshold of my door
Is worn by the poor,
Who hither come, and freely get
Good words or meat.
Like as my parlor, so my hall
And kitchen small;
A little buttery, and therein
A little bin,
Which keeps my little loaf of bread
Unchipt, unflead.
Some brittle sticks of thorn or brier
Make me a fire,
Close by whose living coal I sit,
And glow like it.
Lord, I confess, too, when I dine,
The pulse is Thine,
And all those other bits that be
There placed by Thee.
The worts, the purslain, and the mess
Of water-cress,
Which of thy kindness Thou hast sent;
And my content
Makes those, and my belovèd beet,
To be more sweet.
'T is Thou that crownest my glittering hearth
With guiltless mirth;
And giv'st me wassail bowls to drink,
Spiced to the brink.

ROBERT HERRICK

Lord, 't is thy plenty-dropping hand
That sows my land,
And giv'st me, for my bushel sown,
Twice ten for one:
Thou mak'st my teeming hen to lay
Her egg each day,
Besides my healthful ewes to bear
Me twins each year;
The while the conduits of my kine
Run cream for wine:
All these and better Thou dost send
Me for this end:
That I should render for my part
A thankful heart,
Which, fired with incense, I resign
As wholly Thine:
But the acceptance—that must be,
My Christ, by Thee.

To Dianeme

SWEET, be not proud of those two eyes,
Which, starlike, sparkle in their skies;
Nor be you proud, that you can see
All hearts your captives, yours yet free.
Be you not proud of that rich hair,
Which wantons with the lovesick air;
Whenas that ruby which you wear,
Sunk from the tip of your soft ear,
Will last to be a precious stone
When all your world of beauty's gone.

ROBERT HERRICK

To Ben Jonson

A H Ben!
Say how, or when
Shall we thy guests
Meet at those lyric feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun?
Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad;
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.

My Ben!
Or come agen,
Or send to us
Thy wit's great over-plus;
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it,
Lest we that talent spend;
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock, the store
Of such a wit the world should have no more.

His Litany to the Holy Spirit

I N the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

ROBERT HERRICK

When I lie within my bed,
Sick in heart, and sick in head,
And with doubts discomfortèd,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

* * * * *

When the artless doctor sees
No one hope, but of his fees,
And his skill runs on the lees,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

When his potion and his pill,
His, or none, or little skill,
Meet for nothing but to kill,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

* * * * *

When the priest his last hath prayed,
And I nod to what is said,
'Cause my speech is now decayed,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

FRANCIS QUARLES

ENGLAND, 1592-1644

The Vanity of the World

FALSE world, thou lvest: thou canst not lend
The least delight:
Thy favors cannot gain a friend,
They are so slight:
Thy morning pleasures make an end
To please at night:
Poor are the wants that thou supplyest,
And yet thou vauntest, and yet thou vvest
With Heaven: fond earth, thou boasts; false world
thou lvest.

Thy babbling tongue tells golden tales
Of endless treasure;
Thy bounty offers easy sales
Of lasting pleasure:
Thou askest the conscience what she ails,
And swearest to ease her;
There's none can want where thou supplyest;
There's none can give where thou denyest.
Alas! fond world, thou boasts; false world, thou lvest.

What well-advised ear regards
What earth can say?
Thy words are gold, but thy rewards
Are painted clay:

FRANCIS QUARLES

Thy cunning can but pack the cards,
 Thou canst not play:
Thy game at weakest, still thou vvest;
If seen, and then revyled, denyest:
Thou art not what thou seem'st; false world, thou lvest.

Thy tinsel bosom seems a mint
 Of new-coined treasure;
A paradise, that has no stint,
 No change, no measure;
A painted cask, but nothing in 't,
 Nor wealth, nor pleasure:
Vain earth! that falsely thus complyest
With man; vain man! that thou relyest
On earth; vain man, thou dotest; vain earth, thou lvest.

What mean dull souls, in this high measure,
 To haberdash
In earth's base wares, whose greatest treasure
 Is dross and trash?
The height of whose enchanting pleasure
 Is but a flash?
Are these the goods that thou supplyest
Us mortals with? Are these the highest?
Can these bring cordial peace? false world, thou lvest.

Delight in God Only

I LOVE, and have some cause to love, the earth—
 She is my maker's creature, therefore good.
She is my mother, for she gave me birth;
 She is my tender nurse, she gives me food:
But what's a creature, Lord, compared with Thee?
Or what's my mother or my nurse to me?

* * * *

FRANCIS QUARLES

To Heaven's high city I direct my journey,
Whose spangled suburbs entertain mine eye—
Mine eye, by contemplation's great attorney,
Transcends the crystal pavement of the sky;
But what is Heaven, great God, compared to Thee?
Without Thy presence, Heaven's no heaven to me.

The highest honors that the world can boast
Are subjects far too low for my desire;
The brightest beams of glory are, at most,
But dying sparkles of Thy living fire:
The loudest flames that earth can kindle, be
But nightly glow-worms if compared to Thee.

Without Thy presence, wealth is bags of cares;
Wisdom but folly; joy, disquiet, sadness;
Friendship is treason, and delights are snares;
Pleasures but pain, and mirth but pleasing madness—
Without Thee, Lord, things be not what they be,
Nor have their being, when compared with Thee.

In having all things, and not Thee, what have I?
Not having Thee, what have my labors got?
Let me enjoy but Thee, what further crave I?
And having Thee alone, what have I not?
I wish nor sea, nor land, nor would I be
Possessed of Heaven, Heaven unpossessed of Thee!

FRANCIS QUARLES

Lord, When We Leave the World

LORD, when we leave the world and come to Thee,
How dull, how slug are we!

* * * * *

If Pleasure beckon with her balmy hand,
Her beck's a strong command:

If Honor calls us with her courtly breath,
An hour's delay is death:

If Profit's golden-fingered charm inveigles,
We clip more swift than eagles:

Let Auster weep, or blustering Boreas roar,
Till eyes or lungs be sore:

Let Neptune swell, until his dropsy sides
Burst into broken tides:

* * * * *

How fast and fearless do our footsteps flee!
The lightfoot roebuck's not so swift as we.

HENRY KING, BISHOP OF CHICHESTER

ENGLAND, 1592-1669

From "Exequy on His Wife"

SLEEP on, my Love, in thy cold bed
Never to be disquieted!
My last "good-night!" Thou wilt not wake
Till I thy fate shall overtake;
Till age, or grief, or sickness must
Marry my body to that dust
It so much loves; and fill the room
My heart keeps empty in thy tomb.

HENRY KING

Stay for me there: I will not fail
To meet thee in that hollow vale.
And think not much of my delay:
I am already on the way,
And follow thee with all the speed
Desire can make, or sorrows breed.
Each minute is a short degree
And every hour a step towards thee. . . .
'Tis true—with shame and grief I yield—
Thou, like the van, first took'st the field;
And gotten hast the victory
In thus adventuring to die
Before me, whose more years might crave
A just precedence in the grave.
But hark! my pulse, like a soft drum,
Beats my approach, tells thee I come;
And slow however my marches be
I shall at last sit down by thee.

The thought of this bids me go on
And wait my dissolution
With hope and comfort. Dear—forgive
The crime—I am content to live
Divided, with but half a heart,
Till we shall meet and never part.

GEORGE HERBERT

ENGLAND, 1593-1632

Virtue

SWEET day, so cool, so calm, so bright—
The bridal of the earth and sky!
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

GEORGE HERBERT

Sin

LORD, with what care hast Thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us, bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises:

Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of glory ringing in our ears:
Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears!
Yet all these fences and their whole array
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.

The Pulley

Even the great poets stumble sometimes. Here Herbert makes the mistake of using the word "rest" in the first line of the last stanza, having used the word in a wholly different meaning only six lines before. This rather sudden change in the meaning strikes you unpleasantly.

WHEN God at first made Man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
Let us (said He) pour on him all we can—
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span.

GEORGE HERBERT

So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honor, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast.

The Elixir

TEACH me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see;
And what I do in anything
To do it as for Thee.

* * * * *

All may of Thee partake
Nothing can be so mean
Which with his tincture, 'for Thy sake,'
Will not grow bright and clean.

GEORGE HERBERT

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

From "The Flower"

AND now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write:
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: O my only Light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom Thy tempests fell all night.

JAMES SHIRLEY

ENGLAND, 1596-1666

Death, the Leveller

THE glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things:
There is no armor against Fate:
Death lays his icy hand on kings:
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crookèd scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill;
But their strong nerves at last must yield:
They tame but one another still:
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow:
Then boast no more your mighty deeds!
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds.
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb:
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

THOMAS CAREW

ENGLAND, 1598?-1639?

ONE of the famed poets of England during the reign of Charles I, Carew deserves mention chiefly as the precursor and representative of what may be called the courtier and conventional school of poetry. His poems, mostly lyrical, and treating of slight subjects, are among the best of their kind, and exhibit much fancy and feeling. I select Carew, along with Herrick, for special mention among the group of "cavalier lyrists", because of his special pains in perfecting his verses, and because he "holds Shakespeare with one hand and Congreve with the other"; that is, he had the Elizabethan ardor combined with the sense of form.

Song

ASK me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauty's orient deep
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love Heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more whither doth haste
The nightingale when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters and keeps warm her note.

THOMAS CAREW

Ask me no more where those stars 'light
That downward fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixèd become as in their sphere.

Ask me no more if east or west
The Phœnix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

Mediocrity in Love Rejected

GIVE me more love, or more disdain;
The torrid or the frozen zone
Bring equal ease unto my pain,
The temperate affords me none:
Either extreme, of love or hate,
Is sweeter than a calm estate.

Give me a storm, if it be love:
Like Danaë in that golden shower,
I'll swim in pleasure; if it prove
Disdain, that torrent will devour
My vulture hopes; and he's possessed
Of Heaven, that is from Hell released.
Then crown my joys, or cure my pain:
Give me more love, or more disdain.

The Unfading Beauty

HE that loves a rosy cheek,
Or a coral lip admires,
Or from star-like eyes doth seek
Fuel to maintain his fires,
As old Time makes these decay,
So his flames must waste away.

But a smooth and steadfast mind,
Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined,
Kindle never-dying fires.
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes.

* * * * *

Ungrateful Beauty Threatened

KNOW, Celia, since thou art so proud,
'Twas I that gave thee thy renown.
Thou hadst in the forgotten crowd
Of common beauties lived unknown,
Had not my verse extolled thy name,
And with it impeded the wings of Fame.

That killing power is none of thine:
I gave it to thy voice and eyes;
Thy sweets, thy graces, all are mine:
Thou art my star, shinest in my skies:
Then dart not from thy borrowed sphere
Lightning on him that fixed thee there.

Tempt me with such affrights no more;
Lest what I made I uncreate:
Let fools thy mystic forms adore,
I know thee in thy mortal state:
Wise poets that wrapt Truth in tales,
Knew her themselves through all her veils.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND, 1599

THESE lines were incorporated by Shakespeare in *The Passionate Pilgrim*.

Crabbed Age and Youth

C RABBÈD Age and Youth
Cannot live together:
Youth is full of pleasance,
Age is full of care;
Youth like summer morn,
Age like winter weather;
Youth like summer brave,
Age like winter bare.

Youth is full of sport,
Age's breath is short;
Youth is nimble, Age is lame;
Youth is hot and bold,
Age is weak and cold;
Youth is wild, and Age is tame.
Age, I do abhor thee;
Youth, I do adore thee;
Oh, my Love, my Love is young!
Age, I do defy thee:
O, sweet shepherd, hie thee!
For methinks thou stayest too long.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND, 1602

Madrigal

MY Love in her attire doth show her wit,
It doth so well become her;
For every season she hath dressings fit,
For Winter, Spring, and Summer.
No beauty she doth miss
When all her robes are on:
But Beauty's self she is
When all her robes are gone.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND, 1605

To Love

FAIN would I change that note
To which fond love hath charmed me,
Long, long to sing by rote,
Fancying that that harmed me:
Yet when this thought doth come-
Love is the perfect sum
Of all delight.
I have no other choice
Either for pen or voice
To sing or write.

ANONYMOUS

O Love, they wrong thee much
That say thy sweet is bitter,
When thy rich fruit is such
As nothing can be sweeter.
Fair house of joy and bliss
Where truest pleasure is,
I do adore thee:
I know thee where thou art,
I serve thee with my heart,
And fall before thee.

THOMAS RANDOLPH

ENGLAND, 1605-1635

His wit and learning endeared him to Ben Jonson, who adopted Randolph as a tribal son of the Muses. Abundantly endowed with intellect and imagination, had he lived longer Randolph might have been a dangerous rival of or a master to Dryden. "He showed no precosity of genius, but was gradually gathering his singing-robcs about him," when he died. Twenty-nine has been a tragic age for poets; at twenty-nine Marlowe and Shelley died, and although Randolph did not approach even the lesser of these two, he was allowed least of all to develop the promise of greatness within him.

THOMAS RANDOLPH

Love and Reverence

I HAVE a mistress, for perfections rare
In every eye, but in my thoughts most fair.
Like tapers on the altar shine her eyes;
Her breath is the perfume of sacrifice;
And wheresoe'er my fancy would begin,
Still her perfection lets religion in.
We sit and talk, and kiss away the hours
As chastely as the morning dews kiss flowers:
I touch her, like my beads, with devout care,
And come unto my courtship as my prayer.

EDMUND WALLER

ENGLAND, 1606-1687

Go, Lovely Rose

GO, lovely Rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

EDMUND WALLER

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired:
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die—that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee:
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

Old Age

THE seas are quiet when the winds give o'er;
So calm are we when passions are no more.
For then we know how vain it was to boast
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.
Clouds of affection from our younger eyes
Conceal that emptiness which age describes.

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that Time hath made:
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND, 1607

There Is a Lady Sweet and Kind

THERE is a Lady sweet and kind,
Was never face so pleased my mind:
I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her till I die.

Her gesture, motion and her smiles,
Her wit, her voice my heart beguiles,
Beguiles my heart, I know not why,
And yet I love her till I die.

Cupid is wingèd and doth range,
Her country so my love doth change;
But change she earth, or change she sky,
Yet will I love her till I die.

JOHN MILTON

ENGLAND, 1608-1674

MILTON—the battling Milton—is the most dramatic figure in English literature. His life was tragedy; his height of achievement as a poet has simply not been surpassed in any tongue.

There were two great souls struggling in Milton: that was his tragedy. The wrestle was between the pure poetic genius evinced even in his earliest writing, and the spirit of righteousness fully summoned up in him by the rising of the Puritans. He dedicated himself to the cause he thought to be just, repressed the poetry in his veins until that cause was lost; then in seclusion he set himself to the great task envisioned long before—the epic which was to be the consummation of his powers and in which he hoped to justify the conclusions of his soul.

There is a musical basis unmistakable in all of Milton's poetry; it is notable from the beginning of his creative life. His father was a musician, and there is copious testimony to Milton's personal thrall to music. He also wandered much in the fragrant and colored gardens of Elizabethan and later poetry. His nature was always serious, but in the spring-tides of his life, he possessed a grace of mind, a chaste appreciation of the sensuous; and he was never actually a truer poet. In the six-year period spent at Horton (a small village on the river Colne near London) after his sojourn at Cambridge—a period Milton called "absolute leisure", the poet was subjecting himself to a thorough study of classic literatures and to what he himself doubtless considered the apprenticeship of his talents. But his 'prentice verses are imperishable.

JOHN MILTON

A scholar of the lamp, Milton felt more sharply than dwellers of the countryside the natural charm of hills and woods and the homely piquancy of rural life. This does not imply, to be sure, that he had a keener nature observation. But the complementary descriptive poems, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, expressing respectively the brighter and the more subdued aspects of the scholar's life, are remarkable for their fusion of book-learnedness with imagination quickened by the sunlight and twilight of the country.

To the Horton period belongs the masque *Comus* with its magic:

"The sounds and seas, with all their finny droves,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves."

Here, too, belongs *Lycidas*, surely in some ways the finest elegy in our language. It has "majestic progressions, large passages of sound", intricate spell of rhyme, noble sorrow. The sudden intrusion, in the midst of this lament, of a grim, almost grotesque, but grand and passionate invective against the corrupt clergy, casts a shadow far into the future, to the time when, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton was to utter many thunders, justifying the ways of God to man.

In Italy, a few months after writing *Lycidas*, Milton heard of the gathering clouds of civil war in England. As if in response to a summons, he returned home, and probably he never knew happiness again, although he worked zealously for Cromwell's party. The devastating years followed: his first marriage, unhappy; his second, blighted by bereavement; finally, his third, comfortable and permanent, but too late for sweetness. Under Cromwell, his political secretaryship was due to his position in the thick of pamphlet controversy, wherein occasionally, as in pages of the *Areopagitica*, he reaches passionate eloquence, but more often harangues "with a vengeful

JOHN MILTON

fury that would have delighted Calvin." Loss of sight, the overthrow of the Puritan party, the destruction or captivity of his friends, self-concealment and final retirement in loneliness of spirit—these cap the influences which changed Milton from the winning, half-pagan scholar of Horton to the soured man who dictated—to his unhappy daughters—the pages of *Paradise Lost*.

Evidences of this change, ample in *Paradise Lost*, are strongest in Milton's great tragedy after the Greek model, *Samson Agonistes*, where Samson, helpless and indomitable, is Milton. This trait of irreconcilableness is strong in these late works of the poet: the preeminence of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is due to his persistence in spite of assured defeat. But the dignity and splendor of Milton's verse, and the passion in his utterance sustain these somber masterpieces. This is a region where darkness and smoke undeniably obscure the air; but there is a wild light blazing awfully across the heavens, revealing vistas vast and mysterious. For Milton to the end retained the gift of intense lyrical expression, which is the essence of all poetry.

There has been a tendency of late among the light-minded literati and the petty poetasters to attack the reputations of certain great figures of our heritage such as Tennyson and Milton. These fastidious critics are usually of the sort whose anxiety to get a hearing is equalled only by the ineffable mediocrity of their performance in respect to slovenly lines, shoddy reporting (called "observation") and feeble thought. Themselves of relaxed minds and modes of living, and incapable of the patience or discrimination to school themselves, they despise Milton's austerity and scout the result of his long period of study. They proclaim "new" poetry; Milton knew that poetry always builds on what has been. Milton's "vagueness", his "organ-tones", his "easy" blank verse, are the bait and butt of these radicals. Let them make merry in the darkness, for tomorrow's sun, which will show Milton proud and serene, will shrivel them up.

JOHN MILTON

On His Blindness

WHEN I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide:
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts: who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

An Epitaph on the 'Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare

WHAT needs my Shakespeare for his honored
bones—
The labor of an age in pilèd stones?
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.

JOHN MILTON

For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavoring art,
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And, so sepulchered, in such pomp dost lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

At a Solemn Music

BLEST pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbèd Song of pure content,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colored throne
To Him that sits thereon
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee,
Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
Their loud up-lifted angel trumpets blow;
And the Cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly;
That we on Earth, with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed

JOHN MILTON

In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that Song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial concert us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light!

L'Allegro

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks and sights
unholy!
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous
wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There under ebon shades, and low-browed rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven ycleped Euphrosyne,
And, by men, heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing—
As he met her once a-Maying—
There, on beds of violets blue
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe and debonair.

JOHN MILTON

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity—
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek—
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter, holding both his sides.
Come! and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreprouèd pleasures free—
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull Night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow,
Through the sweet-brier, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn door,
Stoutly struts his dames before;
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering Morn,
From the side of some hoar hill
Through the high wood echoing shrill;
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,

JOHN MILTON

Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the plowman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landscape round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray—
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest—
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighboring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis, met,
Are at their savory dinner set
Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earliest season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,

JOHN MILTON

And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid,
Dancing in the checkered shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail;
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale
With stories told of many a feat:
How fairy Mab the junkets eat—
She was pinched and pulled, she said,
And he, by friar's lantern led;
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-laborers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And, crop-full, out of doors he flings
Ere the first cock his matin rings.

Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold—
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp and feast and revelry,

JOHN MILTON

With masque and antique pageantry—
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream;
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learnt sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse—
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony—
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.

These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

Il Penseroso

HENCE, vain deluding joys,
 The brood of folly without father bred!
 How little you bestead,
 Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!
 Dwell in some idle brain,
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
 As thick and numberless
 As the gay motes that people the sunbeams;
 Or likest hovering dreams,
 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
 But hail, thou goddess, sage and holy!
 Hail, divinest Melancholy!
 Whose saintly visage is too bright
 To hit the sense of human sight,
 And therefore to our weaker view
 O'erlaid with black, staid wisdom's hue—
 Black, but such as in esteem
 Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
 Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
 To set her beauty's praise above
 The sea-nymphs, and their powers offended.
 Yet thou art higher far descended;
 Thee bright-haired Vesta, long of yore
 To solitary Saturn bore;
 His daughter she; (in Saturn's reign
 Such mixture was not held a stain).
 Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
 He met her, and in secret shades
 Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
 While yet there was no fear of Jove.

JOHN MILTON

Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn!
Come! but keep thy wonted state,
With even step and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad, leaden, downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast;
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet;
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing:
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne—
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak.
Sweet bird! that shunn'st the noise of folly.
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen

JOHN MILTON

On the dry, smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way;
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;
Or if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom—
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,

JOHN MILTON

Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.

But, O sad virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower!
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what Love did seek!
Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold—
Of Camball and of Algarsife—
And who had Canace to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass—
And of the wondrous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride!
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of tourneys and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear;
Not tricked and flounced, as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kerchiefed in a comely cloud
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or ushered with a shower still
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute drops from off the eaves.
And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring

JOHN MILTON

To archèd walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid;
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen genius of the wood.

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowered roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows, richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full voiced quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.

JOHN MILTON

And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy ground and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.

These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

Lycidas

A LAMENT FOR A FRIEND DROWNED IN HIS PASSAGE FROM
CHESTER ON THE IRISH SEA, 1637

YET once more, O ye Laurels, and once more,
Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin, then, Sisters of the Sacred Well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse;
So may some gentle Muse

JOHN MILTON

With lucky words favor my destined urn,
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud;
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering
wheel.

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Tempered to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.

But oh, the heavy change, now thou art gone—
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn;
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen,
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherds' ear.

Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed over the head of your loved Lycidas?

JOHN MILTON

For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream—
Ay me! I fondly dream.
“Had ye been there”; for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself for her enchanting son,
Whom universal Nature did lament,
When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His glory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble minds)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. “But not the praise,”
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears;
“Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies;
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy need.”

JOHN MILTON

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honored flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood;
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea;
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged winds
That blows from off each beakèd promontory;
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed;
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.¹

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge,
Like to that sanguine flower, inscribed with woe.
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"
Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain)
He shook his mitered locks, and stern bespake:
"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!

¹ In this last couplet we have the phrase "Built in the eclipse," which is supremely suggestive and imaginative—referring perhaps to the inrush of demons from the deep in the opportune moment of eclipse. What a vastitude of idea is compressed into a little space!—E. M.

JOHN MILTON

Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!
What recks it them? what need they? they are sped;
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw:
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said;
But that two-handed engine at the door,
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enameled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe and pale jessamine,
The white pink and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,

And daffodillies fill their cups with tears
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
 For so to interpose a little ease,
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
 Ah me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
 Where thou, perhaps, under the whelming tide
 Visitest the bottom of the monstrous world;
 Or whether thou to our moist vows denied,
 Sleepest by the fable of Bellerus old,
 Where the great vision of the guarded mount
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold;
 Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth;
 And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth!

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor:
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky;
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
 Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
 Where, other groves and other streams along,
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
 In the blest kingdoms meek of Joy and Love.
 There entertain him all the saints above,
 In solemn troops and sweet societies,
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,
 And wipe the tears forever from his eyes.
 Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
 Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,

JOHN MILTON

In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray:
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay;
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay:
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

Night Mysteries

FROM "COMUS"

THE star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile welcome, Joy and Feast,
Midnight Shout and Revelry,
Tipsy Dance and Jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odors, dropping wine.
Rigor now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age and sour Severity,
With their grave saws in slumber lie.

JOHN MILTON

We that are of purer fire
Imitate the starry quire,
Who in their nightly watchful spheres
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin:
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail Goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto, t'whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame;
That ne'er art called, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat, and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn, on the Indian steep
From her cabined loophole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

* * * *

JOHN MILTON

Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue, she along is free:
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime:
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

The Haunt of the Sorcerer

FROM "COMUS"

WITHIN the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circé born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmolding reason's mintage
Charactered in the face. This I have learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom-glade, whence night by night,
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscuréd haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,
T' inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,

JOHN MILTON

I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill; but ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceased, and listened them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy flighted steeds,
That draw the litter of close-curtained sleep.
At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air; that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death: but, oh, ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honored Lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear,
And "O poor hapless nightingale," thought I,
"How sweet thou singest, how near the deadly snare!"

Philosophy

HOW charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools
suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

JOHN MILTON

From "Christmas Hymn"

FROM THE "ODE ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY"

Majestically great as Milton is, still he occasionally falls into rhetorical blunders, as in this ode, where, in an opening stanza, he says:

*"Nature, in awe to Him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize."*

This of course is not true to the fact, nor true to the imagination. We feel it to be a forced concept, a thing that gives the stanza a sense of unreality. It seems to me that in this place and elsewhere, Milton fails to step carefully. Yet how great is some of his high-erected verse!

IT was the winter wild
While the heaven-born Child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies:
Nature, in awe to Him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the Sun, her lusty paramour.

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high up hung;
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was by.

JOHN MILTON

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of Light

His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,

Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,

Sat simply chatting in a rustic row:
Full little thought they then
That the mighty Pan

Was kindly come to live with them below:
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,

That with long beams the shamefaced night arrayed:
The helmèd Cherubim,
And sworded Seraphim,

Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire
With unexpressive notes to Heaven's new-born heir.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres!
Once bless our human ears,

If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,

And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

JOHN MILTON

In other parts of this remarkable Hymn, Milton makes, what seems to me, a needless drive against the old Pagan gods—Apollo and the rest—against the young divinities as conceived long ago by the inspired poets of Greece, the poets of her dim divine antiquity. We should doubtless look upon these young gods as revelations of the supernal beauty, as that beauty passed in flashes over the mind of that ancient people. So I have, in the following sonnet, ventured to utter a mild protest:

THE LORD OF ALL

*Milton, you did them wrong the hour you sang
The Lord's Nativity: the fair young gods,
Scorched by your scorn and stricken by your rods,
Were loved of Him who took the mortal pang.
He knew their cliffs that shone, their wells that sprang,
And all the wonder of their purple clime;
And as his feet descended into Time,
Their voices on the hills and sea-reefs rang.*

*So the young gods of Hellas knew the hour
When life's bough was to break in sudden flower;
And in the hush they knelt without a word
Beside the Stall; for in the little one
They saw Apollo come again, and heard
His name cried in the porches of the sun!*

JOHN MILTON

From "Paradise Lost"

The poem opens with a reference to the old Hebraic explanation of the origin of evil, the presence of sin in the world, which is found in Gen. ii. 17: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "In Adam's fall, we sinned all," is the phrase in the old New England Primer. I am adding a few simple footnotes to help my young readers.

THE OPENING ARGUMENT

Book I

OF man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us,¹ and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly Muse,² that, on the secret top
Of Oreb or of Sinai,³ didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed⁴
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion⁵ hill

¹ See Rom v 19-21.

² In his opening of the Iliad and the Odyssey, Homer, the father of epic poetry, invokes the aid of the goddess of poetry. Epic singers since his time have followed his appeal for inspiration. But Milton was a Puritan, and he could not, from the religious nature of his song, call upon a Pagan divinity. He therefore begs the aid of the divine inspiration which moved Moses and other prophets.

³ Horeb and Sinai are two peaks of the same mountain, upon which Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. . . . And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush."

⁴ That is, the Israelites.

⁵ Sion, or Zion, was one of the hills upon which Jerusalem was built. Here David lived, and composed poems under the inspiration, Milton supposes, of his heavenly Muse.

JOHN MILTON

Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook¹ that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount,² while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me,³ for thou knowest; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satest brooding on the vast abyss⁴
And madest it pregnant. What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the high⁵ of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

Say first—for Heaven hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of Hell—say first what cause
Moved our grand parents, in that happy state,
Favored of Heaven so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides.
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?

¹ Between Sion and Mount Moriah, and almost beneath the temple, "fast by the oracle of God," flowed, and still flows, "Siloa's brook." Its fountain is the pool Siloam, which ebbs and rises. Isaiah identifies it with himself: "Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly" (Isa. viii. 6) and Milton here means a poetic reference to him.

² Mount Helicon, haunt of the Muses, was in Bœotia, a part of which was sometimes called Aonia.

³ The poet's appeal for inspiration recalls the testimony of his widow many years after his death. "Being asked whether he did not often read Homer and Virgil, she understood it as an imputation upon him for stealing from those authors, and answered with eagerness, that he stole from nobody but the Muse who inspired him; and, being asked by a lady present who the Muse was, replied it was God's Grace, and the Holy Spirit that visited him nightly."

⁴ See Gen. i. 2.

⁵ Milton's spelling of "height."

JOHN MILTON

The infernal serpent,¹ he it was whose guile,
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host
Of rebel angels, by whose aid, aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equaled the Most High,
If he opposed, and, with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God,
Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

Nine times the space that measures day and night²
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,
Confounded, though immortal. But his doom
Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him: round he throws his baleful eyes,
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay,
Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.
At once, as far as angel's ken, he views
The dismal situation waste and wild.
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,

¹ See Gen. iii; Rev. xii. 9.

² In these nine days was the creation of the world, according to Milton's cosmogony. They succeeded the nine days in which Satan fell (*Paradise Lost*, Book VI.871).

JOHN MILTON

Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes,¹
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.

SATAN RALLIES THE FALLEN ANGELS

Book I

He scarce had ceased when the superior Fiend
Was moving towards the shore; his ponderous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
Behind him cast. The broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist² views
At evening from the top of Fesole,³
Or in Valderno, ⁴ to descry new lands,
Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.
His spear—to equal which the tallest pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast
Of some great ammiral, were but a wand—
He walked with, to support uneasy steps
Over the burning marl, not like those steps
On Heaven's azure; and the torrid clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire.
Nathless ⁵ he so endured, till on the beach
Of that inflamèd sea he stood, and called
His legions, angel forms, who lay entranced
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks

¹ "All hope abandon, ye who enter here," was the inscription over the gate of Dante's hell.

² In his continental journey in 1638-39, Milton visited Galileo, the Tuscan artist or astronomer, who had improved the telescope, and discovered the unevenness of the moon's surface, Jupiter's satellites, the composition of the Milky Way, and other facts.

³ A hill near Florence, Italy.

⁴ The vale or valley of the Arno in Italy.

⁵ A contraction in early English of "no-the-less," not the less.

JOHN MILTON

In Vallombrosa.¹ . . .

He called so loud that all the hollow deep
Of Hell resounded: "Princes, Potentates,
Warriors, the flower of Heaven, once yours, now lost,
If such astonishment as this can seize
Eternal spirits! Or have ye chosen this place
After the toils of battle to repose
Your wearied virtue,² for the ease you find
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heaven?
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
To adore the Conqueror, who now beholds
Cherub and seraph rolling in the flood
With scattered arms and ensigns, till anon
His swift pursuers from Heaven-gates discern
The advantage, and, descending, tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linkèd thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf?
Awake, arise, or be forever fallen!"

MUSTERING THE HOSTS OF HELL

Book I

All these and more came flocking, but with looks
Downcast and damp; yet such wherein appeared
Obscure some glimpse of joy to have found their chief
Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost
In loss itself; which on his countenance cast
Like doubtful hue. But he, his wonted pride
Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
Semblance of worth, not substance, gently raised
Their fainting courage, and dispelled their fears;

¹ A shady valley some eighteen miles from Florence, which Milton doubtless visited. Late travelers say that autumnal leaves from the chestnut forests cover and conceal the waters of the brooks.

² Valor, like the Latin *virtus*.

JOHN MILTON

Then straight commands that, at the warlike sound
Of trumpets loud and clarions, be upreared
His mighty standard. That proud honor claimed
Azazel¹ as his right, a cherub tall;
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurled
The imperial ensign, which, full high advanced,
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,
With gems and golden luster rich emblazed,
Seraphic arms² and trophies; all the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds.
At which the universal host upsent
A shout that tore Hell's concave and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten-thousand banners rise into the air,
With orient colors waving: with them rose
A forest huge of spears, and thronging helms
Appeared, and serried shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable. Anon they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood³
Of flutes and soft recorders,⁴ such as raised
To hight of noblest temper heroes old
Arming to battle, and instead of rage
Deliberate valor breathed, firm and unmoved
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat;
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
With solemn touches troubled thoughts, and chase
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they

¹ This word is interpreted variously; as, "brave in retreat," "powerful against God," and "scapegoat."

² Heraldic devices borne on a shield.

³ "Dorian mood," the severe, grave style of the music of the Greeks. The Spartans went to battle "slowly, to the music of many flute players."

⁴ Flageolets.

JOHN MILTON

Breathing united force¹ with fixed thought,
 Moved on in silence to soft pipes that charmed
 Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil. And now
 Advanced in view they stand, a horrid² front
 Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise
 Of warriors old, with ordered spear and shield,
 Awaiting what command their mighty chief
 Had to impose. He through the armèd files
 Darts his experienced eye, and soon traverse
 The whole battalion views—their order due,
 Their visages and stature as of gods;
 Their number last he sums. And now his heart
 Distends with pride, and, hardening in his strength,
 Glories; for never, since created man,
 Met such embodied force as, named with these,
 Could merit more than that small infantry
 Warred on by cranes. . . .

He, above the rest

In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
 Stood like a tower. His form³ had not yet lost
 All her original brightness, nor appeared
 Less than archangel ruined, and the excess
 Of glory obscured: as when the sun new risen
 Looks through the horizontal misty air
 Shorn of his beams, or, from behind the moon,
 In dim eclipse, disastrous⁴ twilight sheds
 On half the nations, and with fear of change
 Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, yet shone
 Above them all the archangel; but his face

¹ "Breathing united force," an Homeric phrase, suggesting that the host showed their valor and strength, and fixedness of purpose, by their manner of breathing.

² Bristling; Latin, *horridus*.

³ "Form" is treated as if it were a feminine noun, like the Latin *forma*.

⁴ It was the old faith that eclipses foretold calamities. The word is from *dis* ("evil") and *astrum* ("star") ill-starred.

JOHN MILTON

Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge.

THE CHALLENGE OF DEATH

Book II

The other shape—

If shape it might be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed
For each seemed either—black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart: what seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast
With horrid strides; Hell trembled as he strode.
The undaunted fiend what this might be admired—
Admired, not feared (God and his Son except,
Created thing naught valued he, nor shunned)
And with disdainful look thus first began:

“Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,
That darest though grim and terrible, advance
Thy miscreated front athwart my way
To yonder gates? Through them I mean to pass,
That be assured, without leave asked of thee.
Retire; or taste thy folly, and learn by proof,
Hell-born, not to contend with spirits of Heaven.”

To whom the goblin, full of wrath, replied:
“Art thou that traitor angel, art thou he,
Who first broke peace in Heaven and faith, till then
Unbroken, and in proud rebellious arms
Drew after him the third part of Heaven’s sons,

JOHN MILTON

Conjured¹ against the Highest; for which both thou
And they, outcast from God, are here condemned
To waste eternal days in woe and pain?
And reckonest thou thyself with spirits of Heaven,
Hell-doomed, and breathest defiance here and scorn
Where I reign king, and, to enrage thee more,
Thy king and lord? Back to thy punishment,
False fugitive; and to thy speed add wings,
Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart
Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt before."

So spake the grisly terror, and in shape,
So speaking and so threatening, grew tenfold
More dreadful and deform. On the other side,
Incensed with indignation, Satan stood
Unterrified, and like a comet burned,
That fires the length of Ophiuchus² huge
In the arctic sky, and from his horrid hair³
Shakes pestilence and war. Each at the head
Leveled his deadly aim. Their fatal hands
No second stroke intend; and such a frown
Each cast at the other as when two black clouds,
With heaven's artillery fraught, come rattling on
Over the Caspian; then stand front to front,
Hovering a space, till winds the signal blow
To join their dark encounter in mid air.
So frowned the mighty combatants that Hell
Grew darker at their frown; so matched they stood;
For never but once more was either like

¹ Conspiring; sworn together in conspiracy.

² The northern constellation Serpentarius, or the Serpent, which is about forty degrees long. The name (from two Greek words meaning "serpent," and "to hold") may refer to the fable of the infant Hercules squeezing to death two serpents.

³ In reference to the tail. "Comet" is derived from the Greek *Koupn* ("flowing hair"). Comets were supposed to foretell disasters.

JOHN MILTON

To meet so great a foe.¹ And now great deeds
Had been achieved, whereof all Hell had rung,
Had not the snaky sorceress, that sat
Fast by Hell-gate and kept the fatal key,
Risen, and with hideous outcry rushed between.

MAN AND WOMAN MADE ONE UNITY

Book IV

Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
Godlike erect, with native honor clad,
In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
And worthy seemed.

* * * * *

Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd;
For contemplation he and valor formed;
For softness she and sweet attractive grace:
He for God only, she for God in him.

NOW CAME STILL EVENING ON

Book IV

Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung.
Silence was pleased: now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires: Hesperus that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon
Rising in clouded majesty, at length,
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

¹ Christ. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. xc.26). "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

JOHN MILTON

THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE OF THE ANGELS

Book VI

Now went forth the morn,
Such as in highest Heaven, arrayed in gold
Empyrean; from before her vanished night,
Shot through with orient beams; when all the plain
Covered with thick embattled squadrons bright,
Chariots, and flaming arms, and fiery steeds,
Reflecting blaze on blaze, first met his view.

* * * * *

Far in the horizon to the north appeared
From skirt to skirt a fiery region, stretched
In battailous aspect, and nearer view
Bristled with upright beams innumerable
Of rigid spears, and helmets thronged, and shields
Various, with boastful argument portrayed,
The banded powers of Satan hasting on
With furious expedition; for they weened
That selfsame day, by fight, or by surprise,
To win the mount of God, and on his throne
To set the envier of his state, the proud
Aspirer; but their thoughts proved fond and vain
In the midway; though strange to us it seemed
At first, that angel should with angel war,
And in fierce hosting meet, who wont to meet
So oft in festivals of joy and love
Unanimous, as sons of one great Sire,
Hymning the Eternal Father. But the shout
Of battle now began, and rushing sound
Of onset ended soon each milder thought.
High in the midst, exalted as a god,
The Apostate in his sun-bright chariot sat,
Idol of majesty divine, inclosed

JOHN MILTON

With flaming cherubim, and golden shields;
Then lighted from his gorgeous throne, for now
Twixt host and host but narrow space was left,
A dreadful interval, and front to front
Presented, stood in terrible array
Of hideous length: before the cloudy van,
On the rough edge of battle ere it joined,
Satan, with vast and haughty strides advanced,
Came towering, armed in adamant and gold.

BATTLE BETWEEN THE ANGELS AND THE ANARCHS Book VI

Michael bid sound
The archangel trumpet; through the vast of Heaven
It sounded, and the faithful armies rung
Hosanna to the Highest: nor stood at gaze
The adverse legions, nor less hideous joined
The horrid shock. Now storming fury rose,
And clamor, such as heard in Heaven till now
Was never; arms on armor clashing brayed
Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
Of brazen chariots raged; dire was the noise
Of conflict; overhead the dismal hiss
Of fiery darts in flaming volleys flew,
And, flying, vaulted either host with fire.
So under fiery cope together rushed
Both battles main, with ruinous assault
And inextinguishable rage. All Heaven
Resounded; and had earth been then, all earth
Had to her center shook. * * *

Deeds of eternal fame
Were done, but infinite; for wide was spread
That war, and various: sometimes on firm ground

JOHN MILTON

A standing fight, then, soaring on main wing,
Tormented all the air; all air seemed then
Conflicting fire. * * *

Forthwith (behold the excellence, the power
Which God hath in his mighty angels placed!)
Their arms away they threw, and to the hills
(For earth hath this variety from Heaven,
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale)
Light as the lightning-glimpse they ran, they flew:
From their foundations loosening to and fro,
They plucked the seated hills, with all their load,
Rocks, waters, woods, and by the shaggy tops
Uplifting bore them in their hands: amaze,
Be sure, and terror, seized the rebel host,
When coming toward them so dread they saw
The bottom of the mountains upward turned, * * *
and on their heads

Main promontories flung, which in the air
Came shadowing, and oppressed whole legions armed.
Their armor helped their harm, crushed in and bruised
Into their substance pent, which wrought them pain
Implacable, and many a dolorous groan;
Long struggling underneath, ere they could wind
Out of such prison, though spirits of purest light,
Purest at first, now gross by sinning grown.
The rest, in imitation, to like arms
Betook them, and the neighboring hills uptore:
So hills amid the air encountered hills,
Hurled to and fro with jaculation dire,
That underground they fought in dismal shade;
Infernal noise! war seemed a civil game
To this uproar; horrid confusion heaped
Upon confusion rose.

JOHN MILTON

THE VICTOR

Book VI

So spake the Son, and into terror changed
His countenance too severe to be beheld,
And full of wrath bent on his enemies.
At once the four spread out their starry wings
With dreadful shade contiguous, and the orbs
Of his fierce chariot rolled, as with the sound
Of torrent floods, or of a numerous host.
He on his impious foes right onward drove,
Gloomy as night: under his burning wheels
The steadfast empyréan shook throughout,
All but the throne itself of God. Full soon
Among them he arrived; in his right hand
Grasping ten thousand thunders, which he sent
Before him, such as in their souls infixed
Plagues: they, astonished, all resistance lost,
All courage; down their idle weapons dropt;
O'er shields and helms and helmèd heads he rode
Of thrones and mighty seraphim prostrate,
That wished the mountains now might be again
Thrown on them, as a shelter from his ire.
Nor less on either side tempestuous fell
His arrows, from the fourfold-visaged four
Distinct with eyes, and from the living wheels
Distinct alike with multitude of eyes.
One spirit in them ruled; and every eye
Glared lightning, and shot forth pernicious fire
Among the accursed, that withered all their strength,
And of their wonted vigor left them drained,
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen.
Yet half his strength he put not forth, but checked
His thunder in mid volley; for he meant
Not to destroy, but root them out of heaven.

JOHN MILTON

The overthrown he raised, and as a herd
Of goats or timorous flock together thronged,
Drove them before him thunderstruck, pursued
With terrors and with furies, to the bounds
And crystal wall of heaven; which, opening wide,
Rolled inward, and a spacious gap disclosed
Into the wasteful deep. The monstrous sight
Struck them with horror backward, but far worse
Urged them behind: headlong themselves they threw
Down from the verge of heaven; eternal wrath
Burnt after them to the bottómless pit.

On May Morning

NOW the bright morning-star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.
Hail, bounteous May! that dost inspire
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire;
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING

ENGLAND, 1609-1642

Why so Pale and Wan?

WHY so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prithee, why so pale?

Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Prithee, why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Prithee, why so mute?

Will, when speaking well can't win her,
Saying nothing do 't?
Prithee, why so mute?

Quit, quit for shame! This will not move,
This cannot take her.

If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her:
The devil take her!

ANONYMOUS

ENGLAND, 1609

Love Me Not for Comely Grace

LOVE me not for comely grace,
For my pleasing eye or face,
Nor for any outward part,
No, nor for a constant heart;
For these may fail or turn to ill,
So thou and I shall sever:
Keep, therefore, a true woman's eye,
And love me still but know not why—
So hast thou the same reason still
To doat upon me ever!

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT

ENGLAND, 1611-1643

To Chloe:

Who for his sake wished herself younger

THERE are two births—the one when light
First strikes the new awakened sense;
The other when two souls unite,
And we must count our life from thence.
When you loved me and I loved you
Then both of us were born anew.

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT

Love then to us new souls did give
And in those souls did plant new powers;
Since when another life we live,
The breath we breathe is his, not ours.
Love makes those young whom age doth chill,
And whom he finds young keeps young still.

SAMUEL BUTLER

ENGLAND, 1612-1680

BUTLER was fifty years old when he published the first part of the immense lampoon, *Hudibras*, which has given him his place in English letters. In *Hudibras* is waged a war against hypocrisy in general and Puritanism in particular. The poet also aims his shafts of satire against false show of courage, pedantry of learning, the fatuous conventions of love poetry, the worldliness of love, pretensions of pseudo science, delusive aids of law. The terse and stinging sentences of the mock epic were once the current coin of language; but their author lived and died a neglected and morose man, leaving a volume of posthumous papers full of bitter flings against mankind.

"The verse of Butler is scorn made metrical." The volubility, the amazing invention in phrase and illustration, the peculiar "pirouetting" rhythm, the abundant wit, picturesqueness, and point of *Hudibras* make it indeed one of the rare satires of our language.

Description of Hudibras and His Equipments

FROM "HUDIBRAS"

WHEN civil dudgeon first grew high,
 And men fell out they knew not why;
 When hard words, jealousies and fears,
 Set folks together by the ears,
 And made them fight, like mad or drunk,
 For dame Religion, as for punk;¹
 (Whose honesty they all durst swear for,
 Though not a man of them knew wherefore)
 When gospel-trumpeter, surrounded
 With long-eared rout, to battle sounded;
 And pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
 Was beat with fist instead of a stick;
 Then did Sir Knight abandon dwelling,
 And out he rode a colonelling.
 A wight he was, whose very sight would
 Entitle him Mirror of Knighthood,
 That never bowed his stubborn knee
 To anything but chivalry,
 Nor put up blow, but that which laid
 Right Worshipful on shoulder-blade;
 Chief of domestic knights and errant,
 Either for chartel² or for warrant;
 Great on the bench, great in the saddle,
 That could as well bind o'er as swaddle;³
 Mighty he was at both of these,
 And styled of war, as well as peace.
 (So some rats, of amphibious nature,
 Are either for the land or water).

¹ An old word for prostitute.

² A challenge to a duel.

³ To beat or cudgel.

SAMUEL BUTLER

But here our authors make a doubt,
Whether he were more wise or stout:
Some hold the one, and some the other,
But, howso'er they make a pother,
The difference was so small, his brain
Outweighed his rage but half a grain;
Which made some take him for a tool,
That knaves do work with, called a fool.
For 't has been held by many, that
As Montaigne, playing with his cat,
Complains she thought him but an ass,
Much more she would Sir Hudibras
(For that's the name our valiant knight
To all his challenges did write).
But they're mistaken very much;
'Tis plain enough he was no such.
We grant, although he had much wit,
He was very shy of using it,
As being loth to wear it out,
And therefore bore it not about,
Unless on holy-days, or so,
As men their best apparel do.
Besides, 'tis known he could speak Greek
As naturally as pigs squeak;
That Latin was no more difficile,
Than to a blackbird 'tis to whistle:
Being rich in both, he never scanted
His bounty unto such as wanted;
But much of either would afford
To many that had not one word.

* * * * *

He was in logic a great critic,
Profoundly skilled in analytic;
He could distinguish and divide

SAMUEL BUTLER

A hair 'twixt south and south-west side;
On either which he would dispute,
Confute, change hands, and still confute.
He'd undertake to prove, by force
Of argument, a man's no horse;
He'd prove a buzzard is no fowl,
And that a lord may be an owl,
A calf an alderman, a goose a justice,
And rooks committee-men and trustees.
He'd run in debt by disputation,
And pay with ratiocination.
All this by syllogism, true
In mood and figure, he would do.
For rhetoric, he could not ope
His mouth, but out there flew a trope;
And when he happened to break off
In the middle of his speech, or cough,
He had hard words ready to show why,
And tell what rules he did it by;
Else, when with greatest art he spoke,
You'd think he talked like other folk;
For all a rhetorician's rules
Teach nothing but to name his tools.
But, when he pleased to show 't, his speech,
In loftiness of sound, was rich;
A Babylonish dialect,
Which learned pedants much affect;
It was a particolored dress
Of patched and pieballed languages;
'Twas English cut on Greek and Latin,
Like fustian heretofore on satin;
It had an old promiscuous tone,
As if he had talked three parts in one;
Which made some think, when he did gabble,
They had heard three laborers of Babel,

SAMUEL BUTLER

Or Cerberus himself pronounce
A leash of languages at once.¹

* * * * *

In mathematics he was greater
Than Tycho Brahe or Erra Pater;²
For he, by geometric scale,
Could take the size of pots of ale;
Resolve, by sines and tangents, strait,
If bread or butter wanted weight;
And wisely tell, what hour o' the day
The clock does strike, by algebra.

* * * * *

For his religion, it was fit
To match his learning and his wit:
'T was Presbyterian true blue;
For he was of that stubborn crew
Of errant saints, whom all men grant
To be the true church militant;
Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun;
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery;
And prove their doctrine orthodox,
By apostolic blows and knocks;
Call fire, and sword, and desolation,
A godly, thorough reformation,
Which always must be carried on,
And still be doing, never done;
As if religion were intended
For nothing else but to be mended:
A sect whose chief devotion lies

¹ A happy use of the word leash, which means at once three in number, and a band for a dog.

² The name of an obscure old astrologer, applied in the time of Butler to an imposter named Lilly.

SAMUEL BUTLER

In odd perverse antipathies;
In falling out with that or this,
And finding somewhat still amiss;
More peevish, cross and splenetic,
Than dog distract, or monkey sick;
That with more care keep holy-day
The wrong, than others the right way;
Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to:
Still so perverse and opposite,
As if they worshipped God for spite:
The self-same thing they will abhor
One way, and long another for:
Free-will they one way disavow,
Another, nothing else allow;
All piety consists therein
In them, in other men all sin:
Rather than fail, they will defy
That which they love most tenderly;
Quarrel with minced pies and disparage¹
Their best and dearest friend, plum porridge,
Fat pig and goose itself oppose,
And blaspheme custard through the nose.
The apostles of this fierce religion
Like Mahomet's, were ass and widgeon.
To whom our knight, by fast instinct
Of wit and temper was so linkt,
As if hypocrisy and nonsense
Had got the advowson of his conscience.
Thus was he gifted and accoutred,
We mean on the inside, not the outward:
That next of all we shall discuss;
Then listen, sirs; it follows thus.

¹ A reference to the attitude of the Puritans against good cheer, particularly at Christmas.

SAMUEL BUTLER

His tawny beard was the equal grace
Both of his wisdom and his face.
In cut and dye so like a tile,
A sudden view it would beguile;
The upper part whereof was whey,
The nether orange, mixed with grey.
This hairy meteor did denounce
The fall of sceptres and of crowns;
With grisly type did represent
Declining age of government;
And tell, with hieroglyphic spade,
Its own grave and the State's were made.

Saintship Versus Conscience

FROM "HUDIBRAS"

WHY didst thou choose that cursèd sin,
Hypocrisy, to set up in?"

"Because it is the thriving'st calling,
The only saints' bell that rings all in;
In which all churches are concerned,
And is the easiest to be learned."

* * * * *

Quoth he, "I am resolved to be
Thy scholar in this mystery;
And therefore first desire to know
Some principles on which you go.
What makes a knave a child of God,
And one of us?"—"A livelihood."

"What renders beating out of brains,
And murder godliness?"—"Great gains."

"What's tender conscience?"—" 'Tis a botch
That will not bear the gentlest touch;

SAMUEL BUTLER

But, breaking out, despatches more
Than th' epidemical'st plague-sore."

"What makes y' encroach upon our trade,
And damn all others?"—"To be paid."

"What's orthodox and true believing
Against a conscience?"—"A good living."

"What makes rebelling against kings
A good old cause?"—"Administrings."¹

"What makes all doctrines plain and clear?"
"About two hundred pounds a-year."

"And that which was proved true before,
Prove false again?"—"Two hundred more."

"What makes the breaking of all oaths
A holy duty?"—"Food and clothes."

"What, laws and freedom, persecution?"
"Being out of power and contribution."

"What makes a church a den of thieves?"
"A dean and chapter, and white sleeves."

"And what would serve, if these were gone,
To make it orthodox?"—"Our own."

"What makes morality a crime,
The most notorious of the time;
Morality, which both the saints
And wicked too cry out against?"

"'Cause grace and virtue are within
Prohibited degrees of kin;
And therefore no true saint allows
They shall be suffered to espouse."

¹ Administrings were powers given by the law to appropriate the goods of persons dying intestate.

RICHARD CRASHAW

ENGLAND, 1613?—1649

THIS religious poet was born in London, the son of a Puritan pastor. He joined the Church of Rome, and his poems constitute the only important contribution to English literature made by a pronounced Catholic, embodying Catholic doctrine, during the whole of the seventeenth century. It is well known that Crashaw is very uneven, but that he rises at his best to a fervor which is electrical, and which anticipates the poetry of Francis Thompson in our own time. Crashaw's masterpiece (if we except *The Litany* and *The Rapture*) comes at the end of the otherwise tedious production, *The Flaming Heart*, when, in the twinkling of an eye, without warning of any sort, an astonishing inspiration rushes up into the heaven of poetry. *The Weeper* contains many examples of "metaphysical" absurdity; but in verse after verse Crashaw has an unearthly delicacy and witchery which only Blake has equalled. At other times, he seems to invent, in the most casual and unthinking fashion, new metrical effects and new jewelries of diction, which the greatest lyric poets—Coleridge, Shelley, Tennyson, Swinburne—have woven into their own harmonies. It is his inequality that has caused his poetry to fail of popular acclaim.

Of the five principal religious poets of his time—Crashaw, Sandys, Herbert, Quarles, and Vaughan—Crashaw certainly was the greatest genius: hence I select him as the representative of the group.

RICHARD CRASHAW

From "Wishes to His Supposed Mistress"

WHOEVER she be,
That not impossible She
That shall command my heart and me—

Wherever she lie,
Locked up from mortal eye
In shady leaves of destiny—

Till that ripe birth
Of studied Fate stand forth,
And teach her fair steps to our earth—

Till that divine
Idea take a shrine
Of crystal flesh, through which to shine,

Meet you her, my Wishes,
Bespeak her to my blisses,
And be ye called my absent kisses.

I wish her Beauty
That owes not all its duty
To gaudy tire, or glistening shoe-tie—

A Face that's best
By its own beauty drest,
And can alone commend the rest—

A Cheek where grows
More than a morning rose,
Which to no box his being owes—

RICHARD CRASHAW

Eyes that displace
The neighbor diamond, and outface
That sunshine by their own sweet grace—

Tresses that wear
Jewels but to declare
How much themselves more precious are—

Smiles that can warm
The blood, yet teach a charm,
That chastity shall take no harm—

Days that need borrow
No part of their good-morrow
From a fore-spent night of sorrow—

Nights sweet as they,
Made short by lovers' play,
Yet long by the absence of the day—

Life that dares send
A challenge to his end,
And when it comes, say, "Welcome, friend!"

I wish her store
Of worth may leave her poor
Of wishes; and I wish—no more.

Now, if Time knows
That Her, whose radiant brows
Weave them a garland of my vows—

Her that dares be
What these lines wish to see;
I seek no further, it is She.

RICHARD CRASHAW

*Upon the Book and Picture of the
Seraphical Saint Teresa*

THOU undaunted daughter of desires!
By all thy dower of lights and fires;
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
By all thy lives and deaths of love;
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;
By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desire;
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire;
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seized thy parting soul, and sealed thee His;
By all the Heaven thou hast in Him
(Fair sister of the seraphim!)
By all of Him we have in thee;
Leave nothing of myself in me.
Let me so read thy life, that I
Unto all life of mine may die!

On a Prayer-Book Sent to Mrs. M. R.

Here is a remarkable poem from Crashaw, the poet who was so powerful an influence upon that later Catholic poet, Francis Thompson. Crashaw touches here upon an esoteric teaching, which Thomas Lake Harris, the modern seer, has emphasized in his remarkable writings—that Sex is the heart of all true religion and the heart of the living universe—that sex, indeed, is the secret of the Godhead. Because of this fact, sex on earth should be lifted from the infernality of the Pit to the quickening ideality of the Heavens. For the illustrious Swedenborg—in his "Heaven and Hell"—tells us that the heart of Heaven is marriage, the perfect marriage to the one, the marriage of eternity. Crashaw, the seraphic mystic and partial seer, reveals the Christ as the Bridegroom: hence his closing rapture:

RICHARD CRASHAW

*"Happy soul, she shall discover
What joy, what bliss,
How many heavens at once, it is
To have a God become a lover!"*

LO! here a little volume, but great book,
 (Fear it not, Sweet—
 It is no hypocrite!)
Much larger in itself than in its look!

It is—in one rich handful—Heaven, and all
Heaven's royal hosts encamped—thus small
To prove that true schools use to tell,
A thousand angels in one point can dwell.
It is Love's great artillery,
Which here contracts itself and comes to lie
Close couched in your white bosom, and from thence,
As from a snowy fortress of defence,
 Against the ghostly foe to take your part,
 And fortify the hold of your chaste heart.

 It is the armory of light—
Let constant use but keep it bright,
 You'll find it yields
To holy hands and humble hearts
 More swords and shields
Than sin hath snares, or Hell hath darts.
 Only be sure
 The hands be pure
That hold these weapons, and the eyes
Those of turtles—chaste and true,
 Wakeful and wise,
Here is a friend will fight for you.

Dear soul, be strong:
Mercy will come ere long,

RICHARD CRASHAW

And bring her bosom full of blessings—
Flowers of never-fading graces,
To make immortal dressings
For worthy souls, whose wise embraces
Store up themselves for Him who is alone
The Spouse of virgins, and the virgin's son.

But if the noble Bridegroom, when He come,
Shall find the wandering heart from home,
Leaving her chaste abode
To gad abroad—

Amongst the gay mates of the god of flies
To take her pleasures, and to play,
And keep the devil's holiday—

To dance in the sunshine of some smiling,
But beguiling

Sphere of sweet and sugared lies—

Some slippery pair

Of false, perhaps as fair,

Flattering but forswearing eyes—

Doubtless some other heart

Will get the start,

And, stepping in before,

Will take possession of the sacred store

Of hidden sweets and holy joys—

Words which are not heard with ears,

(These tumultuous shops of noise)

Effectual whispers, whose still voice

The soul itself more feels than hears—

Amorous languishments, luminous trances,

Sights which are not seen with eyes—

Spiritual and soul-piercing glances,

Whose pure and subtle lightning flies

Home to the heart, and sets the house on fire,

And melts it down in sweet desire;

RICHARD CRASHAW

Yet doth not stay
To ask the windows leave to pass that way—

Delicious deaths, soft exhalations
Of soul, dear and divine annihilations—
 A thousand unknown rites
 Of joys, and rarified delights—
An hundred-thousand loves and graces,
 And many a mystic thing
 Which the divine embraces
Of the dear Spouse of spirits with them will bring,
 For which it is no shame
That dull mortality must not know a name.
 Of all this hidden store
Of blessings, and ten-thousand more,
 If, when He come,
He find the heart from home,
 Doubtless he will unload
Himself some otherwhere,
 And pour abroad
His precious sweets
On the fair soul whom first He meets.

O fair! O fortunate! O rich! O dear!
 O happy and thrice happy she—
 Dear silver-breasted dove,
 Whoever she be—
 Whose early love
 With wingèd vows
Makes haste to meet her Morning Spouse,
And close with His immortal kisses!
 Happy soul! who never misses
 To improve that precious hour,
 And every day
 Seize her sweet prey—

RICHARD CRASHAW

All fresh and fragrant as He rises,
Dropping, with a balmy shower,
A delicious dew of spices!

O! let that happy soul hold fast
Her heavenly armful; she shall taste
At once ten-thousand paradises:
 She shall have power
 To rifle and deflower
The rich and roseal spring of those rare sweets
Which, with a swelling bosom, there she meets—
Boundless and infinite, bottomless treasures
 Of pure inebriating pleasures:
Happy soul! she shall discover
 What joy, what bliss,
 How many heavens at once, it is
To have a God become her lover!

SIR JOHN DENHAM

IRELAND, 1615-1669

The Thames

FROM "COOPER'S HILL"

"Cooper's Hill" is the poem by which Denham is remembered. It was extravagantly praised by Samuel Johnson as the first example in English of a poem devoted to local description.

THAMES! the most loved of all the Ocean's sons
By his old sire, to his embraces runs,
Hasting to pay his tribute to the sea,
Like mortal life to meet eternity.

Oh, could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full.

RICHARD LOVELACE

ENGLAND, 1618-1658

LOVELACE is chiefly known by two brief songs, *To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars* and *To Althea, from Prison*. They were inspired by a Lucy Sacheverell, to whom Lovelace was devoted. Having celebrated her accomplishments in exquisite poetry, Lovelace was taken prisoner in one of the Continental wars of the period, and was reported to be dead. Whereupon the lady hastily married another. Returning to England, the jilted poet degenerated into a vagabond, and is said to have died of a broken heart.

To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars

TELL me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As thou too shalt adore:
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honor more.

RICHARD LOVELACE

To Althea, from Prison

WHEN Love with unconfined wings
Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings
To whisper at the grates—
When I lie tangled in her hair
And fettered to her eye,
The birds that wanton in the air
Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round
With no allaying Thames,
Our careless heads with roses bound,
Our hearts with loyal flames—
When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
When healths and draughts go free—
Fishes that tipple in the deep
Know no such liberty.

When, like committed linnets, I
With shriller throat shall sing
The sweetness, mercy, majesty,
And glories of my King;
When I shall voice aloud how good
He is, how great should be,
Enlargèd winds, that curl the flood,
Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage;

RICHARD LOVELACE

If I have freedom in my love
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.

ABRAHAM COWLEY

ENGLAND, 1618-1667

The Swallow

FOOLISH prater, what dost thou
So early at my window do?
Cruel bird, thou'st taken away
A dream out of my arms to-day,
A dream that never must equalled be
By all that waking eyes may see.
Thou this damage to repair
Nothing half so sweet and fair,
Nothing half so good, canst bring,
Though men say thou bring'st the Spring.

ANONYMOUS

SCOTLAND, 1621

Waly, Waly

O WALY, WALY, up the bank,
And waly, waly, down the brae,
And waly, waly, yon burn-side,

Where I and my Love wont to gae!
I leaned my back unto an aik,

I thocht it was a trustie tree;
But first it bowed and syne it brak—
Sae my true Love did lichtlie me.

O waly, waly, gin love be bonnie
A little time while it is new!

But when 'tis auld it waxeth cauld,
And fades awa' like morning dew.

O wherefore should I busk my heid,
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
For my true Love has me forsook,
And says he'll never lo'e me mair.

Now Arthur's Seat sall be my bed,
The sheet sall never be 'filed by me;

Saint Anton's well sall be my drink;
Since my true Love has forsaken me.

Marti'mas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaves aff the tree?

O gentle Death, when wilt thou come?
For of my life I am wearie.

ANONYMOUS

'Tis not the frost, that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie,
'Tis not sic cauld that makes me cry;
But my Love's heart grown cauld to me.
When we cam in by Glasgow toun,
We were a comely sicht to see:
My Love was clad in the black velvèt,
And I mysel in cramasie.

But had I wist, before I kist,
That love had been sae ill to win,
I had lock'd my heart in a case o' gowd,
And pinn'd it wi' a siller pin.
And O! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee,
And I mysel were dead and gane,
And the green grass growing over me!

ANDREW MARVELL

ENGLAND, 1621-1678

MARVELL, at his best, wrote exquisite garden-poems, distinguished for their rich imagery and their loyal study of nature. At his second best, he is a gruff political satirist. His ablest satires are *Last Instructions to a Painter* and *The Character of Holland*. Of his lyrics, *The Emigrants in the Bermudas*, *Thoughts in a Garden* and the girl's lament for her dead fawn merit the praise that has long been given them. If we exclude Milton, no poet of that time touches sweeter or nobler lyrical notes; but he is singularly unequal; he flies high, but is not long on the wing.

ANDREW MARVELL

Marvell was one of the heroic spirits of the poetic brotherhood. For a time during the Protectorate, he worked beside Milton. He was a member of the House of Commons in the reign of Charles II. He refused every offer of promotion, refused also, it is said, a direct bribe offered him by the Lord Treasurer. Dying in poverty, Marvell—like Aristides—was buried at the public expense.

From "To His Coy Mistress"

Here, in the last four lines, we have time and eternity flashed upon us in a wonderful manner. This is the manner of the great poets. It is of interest that Marvell was for some time assistant to John Milton as Latin Secretary when Milton was Foreign Secretary to the Council of State in the Cromwell Government.

HAD we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood;
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,

ANDREW MARVELL

And the last age should show your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.

From "Thoughts in a Garden"

FAIR Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence thy sister dear?
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men:
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow:
Society is all but rude
To this delicious solitude.

What wondrous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less
Withdraws into its happiness.
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;

ANDREW MARVELL

Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide:
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and claps its silver wings,
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

How well the skilful gardener drew
Of flowers and herbs this dial new!
Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run;
And, as it works, the industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we.
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckoned, but with herbs and flowers!

An Epitaph

ENOUGH; and leave the rest to Fame!
'Tis to commend her, but to name.
Courtship which, living, she declined,
When dead, to offer were unkind:
Nor can the truest wit, or friend,
Without detracting, her commend.

ANDREW MARVELL

To say—she lived a virgin chaste
In this age loose and all unlaced;
Nor was, when vice is so allowed,
Of virtue or ashamed or proud;
That her soul was on Heaven so bent,
No minute but it came and went;
That, ready her last debt to pay,
She summed her life up every day;
Modest as morn, as mid-day bright,
Gentle as evening, cool as night:
'Tis true; but all too weakly said.
'Twas more significant, she's dead.

From "A Maiden Lamenting for Her Fawn"

Here is a fine passage from a long and otherwise tiresome poem. Enjoy its delicate imaginations; enjoy the playfulness of the fawn and the naïveté of the maiden. Poe assures us that this is "poetry of the loftiest order", and that it is "crowded with nature and with pathos." It is the inner blossom of poetry, the blossom with all the thorns and husk cut away. Rejoice in the maiden's delight in "the little silver feet"—the four feet treading "on the four winds"—one foot for each wind! Behold the fawn lying also among the lilies "like a bank of lilies", or else moving about to feed on roses. Enter into the glowing enthusiasm of the child. At last she cries ecstatically out of her love and grief, out of her tender memory:

*"Had it lived long, it would have been
Lilies without—roses within!"*

IT is a wondrous thing how fleet
 'Twas on those little silver feet!
 With a pretty skipping grace
 It oft would challenge me the race!
 And when it had left me far away,
 'Twould stay, and run again, and stay;
 For it was nimbler much than hinds,
 And trod as if on the four winds.

I have a garden of my own,
 But so with roses overgrown,
 And lilies, that you would it guess
 To be a little wilderness;
 And all the spring-time of the year
 It only lovèd to be there.
 Among the beds of lilies I
 Have sought it oft where it should lie;
 Yet could not, till itself would rise,
 Find it, although before mine eyes;
 For in the flaxen lilies shade,
 It like a bank of lilies laid.
 Upon the roses it would feed
 Until its lips even seemed to bleed;
 And then to me 'twould boldly trip,
 And print those roses on my lip,
 But all its chief delight was still
 On roses thus itself to fill,
 And its pure virgin limbs to fold
 In whitest sheets of lilies cold.
 Had it lived long, it would have been
 Lilies without—roses within.

HENRY VAUGHAN

WALES, 1621-1695

The Retreat

In this poem, written nearly two hundred years before Wordsworth, we get the opening idea of his great "Intimations of Immortality," beginning

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

Doubtless Wordsworth got his start from Vaughan; but he went on, using his own wings. I do not complain of this indebtedness: a poet is justified in taking a hint wherever he finds one, provided he goes on and creates a new beautiful thing.

HAPPY those early days, when I
Shined in my Angel-infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy aught
But a white celestial thought:
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first Love,
And looking back—at that short space—
Could see a glimpse of His bright face:
When on some gilded cloud, or flower,
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity:
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My Conscience with a sinful sound,
Or had the black art to dispense

HENRY VAUGHAN

A several sin to every sense,
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

Oh how I long to travel back,
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain
Where first I left my glorious train;
From whence the enlightened spirit sees
That shady City of Palm-trees.
But ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way!

Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move;
And when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came, return.

From "Friends Departed"

THEY are all gone into the world of light!
And I alone sit lingering here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

Dear, beauteous Death! the jewel of the Just,
Shining nowhere, but in the dark;
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
Could man outlook that mark!

And yet as Angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul, when man doth sleep:
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,
And into glory peep.

HENRY VAUGHAN

From "The World"

I SAW Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it was bright;
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,
Driven by the spheres
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
And all her train were hurled.

* * * * *

JOHN BUNYAN

ENGLAND, 1628-1688

Song in the Valley of Humiliation

HE that is down, needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride:
He that is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
Little be it, or much;
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because Thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is
That go on pilgrimage:
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

JOHN COLLOP
ENGLAND, ABOUT 1630—?

Phoebus, what a name
To fill the sounding trump of future fame!

JOHN DRINKWATER, in *The Yale Review*, has lifted this name out of the obscurity of nearly three hundred years. Collop (influenced perhaps for the worse by "the seraphic John Donne") is clodded and cloudy with conceits that reach into absurdity. Yet we find in his *Poesis Rediviva* (1656) the poems that follow. "*The Leper Cleansed*," says John Drinkwater, "moves with assured mastery to a close which is as wonderful as anything in Seventeenth Century poetry." The striking phrase, "the rhetoric of a tear", is of course "a lift"—with improvement—from Shirley's,

"If thy face move not, let thy eyes express
Some rhetoric of thy tears to make him stay . . ."

The Leper Cleansed

HEAR, Lord, hear
The rhetoric of a tear.
Hear, hear my breast;
While I knock there, Lord, take no rest.

Open! ah, open wide:
Thou art the door, Lord, open; hide
My sin: a spear once entered at thy side.

JOHN COLLOP

See! ah, see
A Naaman's leprosy!
Yet here appears
A cleansing Jordan in my tears.

Lord, let the faithless see
Miracles ceased, revive in me.
The Leper cleansed, Blind healed, Dead raised, by thee.

Whither! ah, whither shall I fly;
To heaven? My sin, ah, sins there cry!
Yet mercy, Lord, O mercy; hear
The atoning incense of my prayer.
A broken heart thoul't not despise.
See! see a contrite's sacrifice!
Keep, keep, vials of wrath, keep still:
I'll vials, Lord, of odors fill:
O prayers, sighs, groans, and tears a shower:
This precious ointment forth I'll pour.
I'll 'noint, wash, wipe, kiss, wash, wipe, weep;
My tears, Lord, in thy bottle keep,
Lest flames of lust and fond desire,
Kindle fresh fuel for thine ire,
Which tears must quench: like Magdalene
I'll wash thee, Lord, till I be clean.

JOHN COLLOP

To the Soul

DULL soul, aspire:
Thou art not earth, mount higher:
Heaven gave the spark, to it return the fire.

Let sin never quench
Thy high flamed spirit hence—
The earth the heat, to Heaven the flame dispense.

Rejoice, rejoice,
Turn, turn each part a voice;
While to the heart-strings tuned ye all rejoice.

The house is swept,
Which sin so long foul kept:
The penny's found for which the loser wept.

And purged with tears,
God's Image re-appears.
The penny truly shews whose stamp it bears.

The sheep long lost,
Sin's wilderness oft crost,
Is found, regained, returned; spare, spare no cost.

'Tis Heaven's own suit;
Hark, how it woo's you to 't:
When Angels need must speak, shall man be mute?

CHARLES COTTON

ENGLAND, 1630-1687

A HAPPY-GO-LUCKY poet and translator—always in difficulties, always happy, always a favorite.

Tomorrow

TOMORROW didst thou say?
 Methought I heard Horatio say tomorrow;
 Go to, I will not hear of it: tomorrow!
 'Tis a sharper, who stakes his penury
 Against thy plenty; who takes thy ready cash,
 And pays thee naught but wishes, hopes and promises,
 The currency of idiots; injurious bankrupt,
 That gulls the easy creditor. Tomorrow!

It is a period nowhere to be found
 In all the hoary registers of Time,
 Unless perchance in the *fool's* calendar.
 Wisdom *disclaims* the word, nor holds society
 With those who own it. No, my Horatio,
 'Tis Fancy's child, and Folly is its father;
 Wrought of such stuff as *dreams* are, and as baseless
 As the fantastic visions of the evening.

